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# THE DISPERSION OF THE TAMIL CHURCH

18 NOV 1940
MADRAS

By

**N. C. SARGANT**

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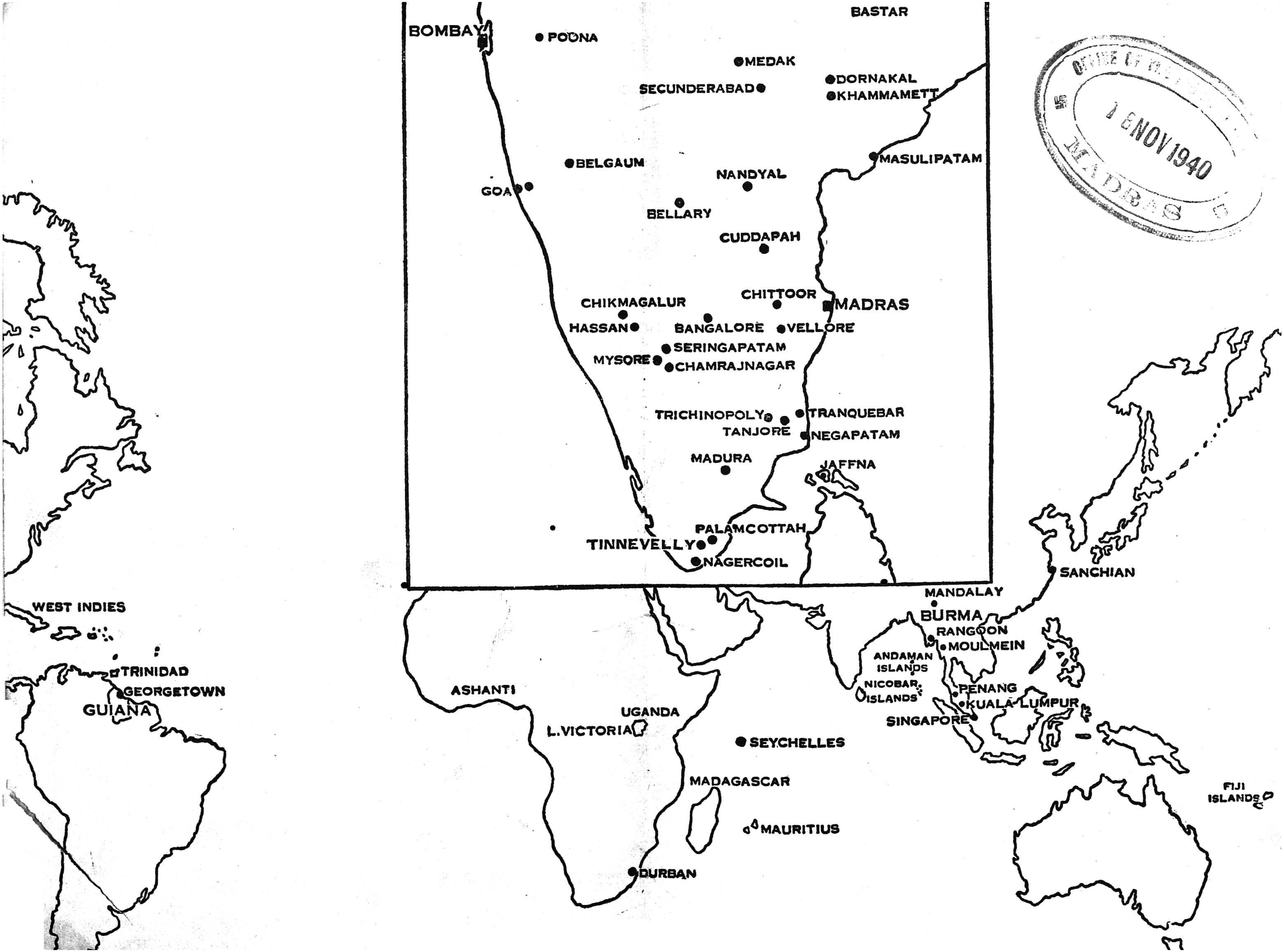


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18 NOV 1940

# THE DISPERSION OF THE TAMIL CHURCH

BY

N. C. SARGANT

*'My sheep were scattered upon all the face of the earth.'*—Ezekiel xxxiv. 6.

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TO

REGINALD CHALONER

WHO FIRST INTRODUCED ME TO

THE TAMIL PEOPLE OF THE DISPERSION

# FOREWORD

This chapter of Church history will be a tonic to its readers. Even those who best love the Church in the Tamil country sometimes feel troubled by the apparent lack of missionary spirit in some parts of it. Yet here is a proof that God has used the scattering abroad of His Tamil children to make His ways known in distant regions in India, and even in far-away continents and islands. For instance, who would have supposed that the great strong Church in Uganda owed anything to the Tamils in India? Yet by the quickening of a saintly missionary, through the work of a Tamil Christian, God gave Uganda a blessing of which the end is not yet. The Tamil Church in general may well be encouraged, and the Church which speaks some of the other great languages may catch a vision of the more far-reaching possibilities of its own life.

There is added interest in the fact that the story is told by a missionary who speaks not Tamil but Kanarese. Having found his own work on coffee estates benefiting by the presence of Christians from the Tamil country who kept the faith in what to them was a foreign land, and having heard that this experience was not unique, he sought out the facts over a large area, with rare patience and persistence, and this book shows how amply he was rewarded.

There may be others like Mr. Sargant who can search old records in station libraries which may not for many years longer survive the monsoons and the

white ants, and this book may set them to work before it is too late. Such facts as are here given are more powerful in the stimulating of zeal for faithful witness than any amount of exhortation on the duty of evangelism.

G. E. PHILLIPS.

*1st February*, 1940.

# PREFACE

Many people have helped me to make this book. The Rev. Godfrey E. Phillips, Professor of Missions in the Selly Oak Colleges, made the suggestion, constantly encouraged and helped me, and has written a Foreword. I remember very gratefully the kindness of the Librarians of the Selly Oak Colleges, the S.P.G., the C.M.S., and the M.M.S.; I would also like to thank people in many parts of the world who have answered my letters of enquiry. Especially my grateful thanks are due to Bishop Neill of Tinnevelly, to Dr. J. H. Maclean, and the Rev. Marcus Ward for reading the book in manuscript and proof and for making many helpful suggestions.

There are several places where this book is incomplete but it is my hope that it will find its way into the hands of people who will tell me more of the Tamil people in India and other parts of the world.

*Chikmagalur, Mysore State,*
*5th August,* 1940. N.C.S.

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# PROLOGUE

Working as a missionary among the coffee estates of Mysore in South India, I have spent much of my time in visiting the Christians who work on the neighbouring estates. Many of them had come from other parts of India. One day a clerk in our post office, a Tamil Christian from Vellore, came and spoke to me about some Tamil Christians who worked in a remote valley of the coffee estates. He said that correspondence had been passing through his office from this valley to villages near his home in the Tamil country, which he knew were Christian villages.

I had never entered this valley, and knew nothing about these Christians. When I went there, I was surprised to find hundreds of Tamil coolies working on the scattered and inaccessible estates of Indian planters. On my first visit, I was unable to find any Christians among the Tamil people. On the second visit I discovered two or three families on one of the estates. On the third visit, the Tamil postal clerk came with us, and we took the magic lantern. We sent word to all the surrounding estates that we were showing the magic lantern at nightfall, and tied up the sheet to the wall of one of the coffee stores. As evening stole over the hills, several hundred Tamil coolies came and sat down in the open space where the coffee is dried. When the darkness came we started to show the pictures, first of the life, then of the death of Christ. At first the people were restive and inattentive, and were unable to follow the explanation of the pictures, which was given in Kanarese. But when the Tamil postal clerk began to speak to them in their own language, and tell them the story of the resurrection of Christ, a great silence fell upon them, and they listened most intently.

At the end he spoke these words. 'Many of you who

have looked upon these pictures of the Saviour of the World, bear His Name, and are His People. Never forget that every time you deny Him, and live as the heathen do, you bring dishonour upon His Name, and add fresh sufferings to the Cross which He has borne for you. Let all of you who are Christians, boldly confess it, and gather with us afterwards for a little prayer meeting.'

That night about thirty people met with us, and, in the open amidst the little cooly huts, bowed their heads in prayer. Then one of their number began to sing a Tamil lyric, and the rest joined in, and as they went on singing, the tears came into their eyes. Some of them had been baptised many years ago, and for a long time had been working on the coffee estates. Occasionally they visited their villages in the Tamil country. A Christian maistry, or overseer, on the estates had baptised their children and, we afterwards learnt, had performed one marriage ceremony.

Further contact with these people revealed a sad story of drunkenness, evil life, and falling away from Christ. I began to feel that the environment and temptations of the coffee estates must be twice as severe as in the pariah villages from which they had come. Physically, their health had been undermined by malaria and hookworm. Morally, the restraint of the community life of their villages had lost its power. Spiritually, the sickness and mortality of the life on the estates had strengthened their belief in the power of the demon world, and redoubled their efforts to drive away the evil spirits that were troubling them. In such surroundings these lost and scattered Christians had no school, no church, and no pastor to care for them. One marvelled that the flame of Christianity had *not* been completely extinguished, and that the picture of the Saviour they had denied, should once more have awakened that dying spark.

The events of that night quickened my interest in the Tamil people of the dispersion. On the coffee estates many more lost Christians were found. The work of bringing them back again into the Christian fold was full of disappointments, and at the same time, of great joy. Among these lost Christians there were cases of real conversion and changed life. Some became great witnesses to their Hindu friends and relatives.

As I listened to accounts of their wanderings in other parts of India and other parts of the world, I realised that there were many strange stories untold. I felt that the Tamil people possessed a character about which I wanted to know more. I wondered if there was anything in their history and race which might explain their enterprise and spirit of adventure; a spirit which, if equalled and surpassed by other races in India, has not produced a Christian Church of such strength and zeal. It has been said that the dispersion of the Jews was a preparation for Christianity in the Ancient World. May it also be said that the dispersion of the Tamil Church was of great help to the apostles of the nineteenth century? Just as the first apostles preached in the Jewish synagogues and numbered the God-fearing Jews as their first believers, the missionaries of the last century found Tamil Christians to welcome them and listen to them in many strange places.[1] Their homes became houses of prayer, and their relatives became the first ingatherings of the Christian missionary.

Part of my furlough in England was spent in the Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, where I had the privilege of using the library, and had access to many missionary volumes old and new, and searched through many old volumes of missionary magazines.

[1] See pp. 14, 16, 27n., 33, 34, 36, 54, 60, 72.

These studies led me far beyond the Tamil country of South India and far beyond the Tamil people themselves. Sometimes they revealed sad stories of apostasy and backsliding, and neglect of missionary opportunity. But they also revealed stories of heroism and evangelistic zeal, not only on the part of missionaries among the Tamil people of the dispersion, but on the part of the Tamil Christians themselves. These studies have also disclosed results, some unexpected and some unknown, of the way in which the Spirit of God has worked through the dispersion of the Tamil people and the Tamil Church.

During a furlough in England it was not possible to collect all the facts and all the statistics or to form conclusions which would make this study in any way complete; nothing but a first-hand knowledge of the people and places mentioned would make any suggestions satisfactory or useful. But I have set down what I have found, that it may strengthen and encourage those who are working among Indians in other lands, and especially that the Indian Christians may learn something of what God has wrought through them.

Not only Tamils but Indians of almost every race have gone to other lands. Nevertheless I have confined this study to the Tamil people, because, though we do not forget the Syrian Church, the Protestant Church first took root among the Tamil people. Among the first emigrants from India there were often a few Tamil Christians, and most of the early missionaries, and workers among Indians overseas came from the Tamil mission fields.

May this study awaken the Indian Church to send out many more workers among their brethren of the dispersion, and to make disciples of every tongue and nation.

# CHAPTER ONE

## HOW THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH TOOK ROOT AMONG THE TAMIL PEOPLE

Christianity in Britain first took root in Ireland and Scotland, and the missionary zeal of the Celtic people did much to win England to the Christian faith. Christianity in India first took root among the Dravidian people of the South, and they have already played a notable part in winning India for Christ.

St. Thomas, it is said, found martyrdom in South India, and left behind the Syrian Church which still honours his name. St. Francis Xavier accomplished his most successful and abiding work among the Tamil people of South India. The first Protestant missionaries to India found a home in South India, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century gathered a great harvest of souls from among the Tamil people in the first Protestant mass movement in India.

Of the languages spoken among the Dravidian people, Tamil is spoken by twenty million people in India. It preserves most clearly the marks of the Dravidian civilisation which existed before Aryan civilisation reached India in the middle of the second millenium B.C. The Tamil language uses fewer Aryan (or Sanskrit) words than any other Dravidian tongue. Aryan civilisation penetrated to South India but it never obliterated the earlier civilisation and culture of the Tamil people.

Our knowledge of the ancient Dravidian civilisation is not great and has been gained largely from a study of the Dravidian words contained in the Tamil language. It is only recently that scholars have begun to throw light upon the origins of the Tamil people,

and to suggest that they came from the Near East; from somewhere perhaps, in between Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean. And so it is of great interest that an anthropologist, Dr Hutton, should speak in the *Census of India* Report for 1931 of a combination of Armenoid and Mediterranean types to be found in India, particularly among the Tamil people. The same report says (p. 454), 'We find the Dravidian speakers of today having a culture of very great antiquity, but also strongly suggestive of Mesopotamian affinities.'

One wonders whether archæologists, excavating the ruined cities of the Indus valley, at Mohenjo-daro and other places, will ever identify the civilisation they have discovered with that of the Dravidian people. As one reads of it it is difficult not to be reminded of life in South India. The excavations at Ur of the Chaldees are of extraordinary interest, and there is some reason to suppose that when Abraham had his revelation of the True God, and led his people from among the idol worshippers of Ur, he might have been calling them from the religion which we see in part to-day among the village shrines of South India.

As we have already indicated, the Tamil language throws light upon the ancient Dravidian civilisation. In a different way, Tamil literature tells us something of the moral ideas and religious beliefs of the Dravidians. One finds ideas which do not harmonise with the teaching of the Sanskrit scriptures. The great Tamil poem, the *Kural*, contains ideas of God and the duties of man which suggest differences from those contained in Sanskrit books. The Vedas describe pariahs as unfit for knowledge and religious teaching, but the Tamils ascribe the *Kural* to a pariah poet, Tiruvalluvar. The Tamil language has a word for God, *Kadavul*, which is not found in any other

Indian language. It is even used by the lower castes of the social system. Thurston (*Castes and Tribes*, vol. vi, p. 104) says that even the pariahs acknowledge the existence of a supreme, omnipresent, personal, spiritual being, the source of all who they call *Kadavul* (He who is). *Kadavul* possesses no temples and is not worshipped. He thinks that the pariah priests, and therefore the pariahs as a people, are very ancient, and that ten centuries ago they were a respectable community and that many were weavers.

While it is difficult to account for the progressive degradation and enslavement of these people, one wonders at the same time whether this heritage of better things in the past may offer some explanation of the amazing ability of the Tamil pariah to rise above the disadvantages of his caste and social position. The Christian religion has brought to him deliverance from the bondage of fear and evil spirits, and British rule has offered him new chances in the army and Government services. Emigration and the planting industry have given him economic freedom.

So to-day we find Tamil men of lowly caste holding positions of importance both in political and municipal life. Emigration has brought to others wealth and prosperity. The preaching of the Christian Gospel has brought freedom from the bondage of degradation and bad habits, and many whose caste was lowly, but whose heart was contrite have become honoured Servants of God. In almost all spheres the Tamils are active and adventurous and are born pioneers, and while they retain all that is deepest and most essential to their race, they quickly adapt themselves to new environments.

[1]To-day, we are living in times when Ceylon, Burma, and Malaya are closing their doors to fresh

[1] See pp. 51, 82.

immigration, and sending home those who have settled there for many years. One wonders what the future will hold for them, especially those who in the land of their adoption have become members of the Church of Christ.

## The Church Takes Root Among Them

What little we have been able to learn of the Dravidian people explains something of the reason why South India has been a favourable soil for the seed of the Christian Church. We have mentioned that St. Thomas was believed to have established in South India a church which has endured to this day, and that the apostle himself suffered martyrdom near Madras. In modern times, the first Christian mass movement in India broke out among the Paravas, poor Tamil fishermen on the southernmost shore of India. The whole community, 20,000 strong, was baptised in 1532 by the Portuguese missionaries. No teacher, however, was left to teach them the meaning of Christian baptism. The great Jesuit missionary, St. Francis Xavier, hearing of their neglected state left his work at Goa and between 1542 and 1544 spent two years working among the Parava Christians. For this task his only helpers were some Tamil boys who came with him from Goa.

In 1773, the dissolution of the Jesuit order left the Parava community almost without pastoral care, but they held on again with a fidelity which we shall see again in the story of the Christian Church among the Tamil people. When St. Francis himself lay dying on the island of Sanchian, off the coast of China, foiled in his intense desire to enter that country, and deserted by everybody, two remained faithful to their dying master, of whom one was a Tamil helper who had come with him from India.

In July 1706, the first Protestant missionaries set

foot in India at Tranquebar in Danish territory. This was right in the heart of the Tamil country. This mission to India was founded and directed in Copenhagen, under the patronage of the king of Denmark. It drew its missionaries from the Lutheran pietists of Halle in Germany, and later part of its income from the English Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. This was surely a venture in church union worthy of our emulation to-day.

The first missionaries, Ziegenbalg and Plütschau, despite their royal patron and influential backing, received from their fellow Christians in India the strangest welcome ever given to Christian missionaries. Their perseverance in adversity has been often remembered and has inspired many other missionaries in times of adversity. They were followed by other German Lutherans, among whom Schultze continued the work of Ziegenbalg and completed the first vernacular Bible in 1727. Fabricius gave to the Tamils their first hymn book. For several years the missionaries found it difficult to work outside the Danish settlement. But perhaps we may regard the hymn book and Bible, two priceless gifts to the Tamil church, as the fruits of the straitened life they were compelled to live.

But in 1762 the way opened for Schwartz 'the brightest star in the constellation of Danish missionaries' to take his mission into the heart of the Tamil country, and to settle first in the holy city of Trichinopoly, and in 1778 in the royal city of Tanjore, where he stayed until his death in 1798. These were the days when the missionary was not refreshed in his labours by occasional furloughs, and encouraged by enthusiastic meetings and crowded churches in his homeland.

Schwartz and his colleagues left converts in many cities of South India. When the Society for the

Propagation of the Gospel took over some of the stations of the old Danish mission from the S. P. C. K., the report for 1829 states 'that in whatever part of Southern India inquiry has been made as to the existence of native Protestant Christians, some, however few, of the converts of a Schwartz or Gerické have been discovered; thus evidencing the beneficial influence of the early missionaries of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in almost every part of the Peninsular'. The dawn of the nineteenth century introduced two new factors, the firm establishment of British rule and the entry of the other British and Continental, as well as American, missionary societies. In many towns, Schwartz's converts became the foundation-stones upon which the new missionaries began to build their work.

Schwartz had not been long in his grave when Palamcottah in the Tinnevelly District, the most distant and neglected of his stations, suddenly grew and blossomed and became in half a century the centre of the greatest missionary church in India. The first convert was a Brahmin widow. She had been living with an English officer, by whom she was instructed in the principles of the Gospel. Schwartz refused to baptize her until after the officer's death. She then took the name Clorinda, and through her efforts a church was built in the fort of Palamcottah, and dedicated by Schwartz in 1785. He left behind an able catechist, Satyanathan, who was ordained in 1790 according to the Lutheran form. In 1791 one of the Tanjore missionaries, Jaenické, was transferred to Palamcottah. Although from the very beginning he was continually laid low with fever, he and Satyanathan went round from village to village preaching the Gospel. He breathed his last in 1800 and Satyanathan was left behind to gather in a great harvest of souls.

Between 1800 and 1816, Tinnevelly was visited only twice by European missionaries, but under the guidance of Satyanathan, an extraordinary movement took place. In 1802, when Gerické, the missionary from Madras visited Tinnevelly, the records show that 5,095 people were baptised during the last quarter of that year. During the pestilence of 1811 a great number of these converts relapsed, and others under bitter persecution migrated to Ceylon.

From 1806 until 1809, the mission was managed by W. T. Ringeltaube of the London Missionary Society, but he was engaged mainly in other labours. Little is known of the years that followed, until in 1816 the Rev. James Hough was appointed Government chaplain in Palamcottah—a post which he held until 1821. He was a talented man and his *Christianity in India* (in five volumes) has preserved much of the history of this period. He found 3,100 Christian souls scattered about in sixty-three places. He found a few schools, and a Tamil Testament preserved here and there. Yet he was agreeably surprised by much that he saw. He found Pastor Abraham the country priest diligently employed and the Christians living together in peace. 'On catechising such as were introduced to me as the principal people, I found them much better taught in their religion than I had anticipated; and, considering the space of time they had been without a missionary, it was highly gratifying and encouraging to find the benign and peaceful genius of Christianity still keeping them at unity with themselves. . . . I have seldom witnessed so much religion in a town in England, as is conspicuous here; and some heathen in the neighbourhood told me candidly, that it was a quiet and good place.' (Hough, vol. v, pp. 137-8.) He started schools, obtained Tamil Testaments and tracts, and wrote to the S. P. C. K. They supplied a little money but no men. He wrote to the Corresponding

Committee of the C. M. S. in Madras, and in 1820 they sent Rhenius and B. Schmid.

Meanwhile in the extreme South of the State of Travancore another movement had started among the Tamil people. Maharayan, afterwards known as Vedamanikkam, of Mayiladi, a village situated just the other side of the hills which separate Travancore from the Tinnevelly District, went on a pilgrimage to Tanjore to worship at the famous shrine of Siva. Here he chanced to hear the preaching of the Rev. J. C. Kohlhoff of the Tranquebar mission. He was so wrought upon by the Truth that he sought further instruction, embraced Christianity, and returned to Mayiladi. He lost no time in proclaiming the Good News and urged his relatives to give themselves to Christ without delay. The first to obey this call was Perumal, and others soon followed until two hundred people awaited baptism. Vedamanikkam went off in search of a missionary. He reached Tranquebar, and found there Ringeltaube of the London Missionary Society. Like the early missionaries of Tranquebar he was a German of strict and pious upbringing. He obeyed the call and entered Travancore in 1806. Although in 1816 he passed mysteriously from the scene of his labours, over 5,000 people had professed Christianity in Travancore by 1822.

The history of the movements into the Christian Church of the Tamil people in Tinnevelly and Travancore has been written elsewhere. During the 19th century other missionary societies took the field in South India. In 1817 the Wesleyan Missionary Society started in Madras and Negapatam. In 1833 the American Madura Mission took over the work of other missionaries in that District. In 1836 the Leipzig Missionary Society was founded and in 1840 took over what remained of the old Danish Lutheran Mission around Tranquebar. In 1855, the American

Arcot Mission entered upon the earlier labours of the S.P.C.K. and S.P.G. missionaries in Chittoor and Vellore. Even as in the twentieth century the favour of God seems to be resting upon the Telugu people, in the nineteenth it rested upon the Tamil people. By 1835 the total number of Christians connected with the English and Danish missions in South Travancore and Tinnevelly was 30,000. In 1851 this number was 51,355 out of 74,176 in the Madras Presidency. In the rest of India there were only 16,916 converts.[1]

[1] Robinson, *History of Christian Missions*, p. 90.

# CHAPTER TWO

## THE TAMILS GO NORTH

In the days of the Madras Army the Tamils were great camp followers and settled in many of the towns of the Madras Presidency and the State of Mysore. Tamil domestic servants found their way into many of the cantonments and cities of North India. When we study the missionary history of towns such as Bangalore, Belgaum, Bellary and Secunderabad we find that the first mission work was begun among the Tamil people, and often the reason was the presence of a few Christians among the soldiers and servants of the cantonment. During the first fifty years of the last century missionaries gained a precarious foothold in many towns of the Mysore and Telugu country and ministered Sunday by Sunday to little congregations composed mainly of Tamil people.

### MYSORE

The story of missions in Mysore is a remarkable illustration of this, especially as it is connected with the name of Samuel Flavel, a Tamil man who became an apostle of no mean order to the Kanarese people. He was born in 1787 in Quilon, and was a Vellala by caste; his Hindu name was Shankaralingam. He went to Ceylon in the service of a Government official. During the Kandyan war of 1815 he found under a tree the copies of some gospels in Tamil, left, it was believed, by followers of the British camp. Writing about his experience Samuel Flavel said,[1] 'After I found the four gospels under a tree in my own language, I read

[1] The story of Samuel Flavel's spiritual pilgrimage is told in a book published in 1827 by two of his colleagues, S. Laidler and J. W. Massie, entitled *Religion in India: a Voice directed to Christian Churches for Millions in the East.*

them and believed what I read, and I was convinced that all my religion and the religion of my father was great folly. I was convinced of this before I had finished reading the ninth chapter of Matthew. . . . I greatly wanted some person to teach me how to understand this book: I made enquiries but could find no person to explain in my own language this holy book to me.'

Samuel Flavel crossed to India, and was there able to buy some books of the Old Testament, a catechism and a hymn book. He arrived at Mysore City and he says 'I was still unable to find any person to teach me, and I continued reading the Scriptures with prayer.' He was about to leave Mysore to go and visit his aged parents, when some friends became curious about the books he was always studying. As a result of their interest he gave up his journey. Under his leadership a little group of people in Mysore devoted themselves entirely to the study of the Scriptures, and many came to hear them read and converse. There was no missionary to guide and protect them and one day the Catholics came and entered the place where they met, tore the books, carried away the papers and beat two of Samuel Flavel's friends. When they complained to the magistrates, no notice was taken of them.

They then went to the Christians at Seringapatam, then an important military station, to ask their advice, and were not only given guidance about the Truth, but were able to observe how the worship of God was conducted. They regularly attended worship at Seringapatam every Sunday. We shall shortly learn more of this group of believers at Seringapatam. But in Mysore opposition became stronger and stronger. Complaints were made that Flavel had never been baptised and was no real Christian but just a disturber of the peace and a troubler of the people. Hearing that a petition had been made against him, he set off and arriving at Tellicherry, was baptised by the

Rev. F. Spring. At Cannanore he learnt that missionaries of the London Missionary Society had come to Bangalore, and so in 1820 he went there and begged them to come and live at Seringapatam. He returned disappointed to Mysore but shortly afterwards he was asked to go to Bangalore. S. Laidler and A. Forbes had arrived there, and they needed the help of Samuel Flavel. Their only assistant was a domestic servant.

He was a great help to the L.M.S. missionaries in establishing their mission in Bangalore. He was ordained and became an eloquent preacher in differents part of the Kanarese country and in 1827 he went to Bellary and spent the last twenty years of his life there in efficient service.

The story of this little group of believers at Seringapatam is confirmed by the narratives of the first Wesleyan missionaries. In April 1821 Elijah Hoole and Titus Close arrived in Bangalore to obtain information, and within a few days Titus Close visited Seringapatam. Some pious Europeans had built themselves a place of worship there, and Close was asked to solemnize a marriage there on Sunday morning. He arrived there at 7 a.m., somewhat before the hour appointed. 'On entering, he was much surprised to find a neatly dressed country born woman engaged in performing divine service to a small congregation in the Tamil language. She read the prayers and after the second lesson Mr. Close married the persons who were waiting. After the marriage service was concluded, she read the remaining part of the morning service and then an extract from a Tamil tract. All this was done with great propriety. Her congregation consisted of twenty, all of whom appeared very attentive. At ten o'clock Mr. Close conducted divine service in English, and administered the Lord's Supper to about twenty-four communicants. In the afternoon he preached again, and afterwards baptized

six adults and some children. Many more applied for baptism; but as they had not been under sufficient previous instruction, Mr. Close desired them to wait until some other missionary came. On the following Tuesday evening Mr. Close preached again and then took leave of this simple and affectionate people. On his departure they gave him their written request for a missionary to be appointed to Seringapatam in a letter signed "The Protestant Christians at Seringapatam". This letter was forwarded to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee in England, who resolved to send a missionary to Seringapatam as soon as their funds would allow them to do so.'

Of the Wesleyan missionaries, Elijah Hoole twice visited Seringapatam and Mysore, conducting services there in both English and Tamil, and in 1821 James Mowat arrived in Bangalore. He built a small hut upon a site which the Wesleyans among the British troops had obtained, and started to hold services in Tamil for the Christians. Until 1833, the efforts of the Wesleyan Missionaries in the Mysore State had been made by missionaries whose only vernacular was Tamil. After 1833, when mission work was extended to the Kanarese people throughout Mysore country, some of the earliest Indian ministers and agents were of Tamil origin. In fact the Wesleyan Mission was not able to ordain a Kanarese Indian minister until 1883. In some of the outstations the tiny Christian congregation was composed of Tamil people, who had either settled there, or were there in some special capacity.

At first baptisms among the Kanarese people were very rare, and it was not until the latter half of the 19th century that the work began to show much progress.[1] We will read how a movement among the

[1] See p. 62.

Koramas of Mysore started when one of their number gave his heart to God under the ministry of the Rev. Ralph Stott in Natal. We will also read how one of the first of the Kanarese outcastes to be won for Christ was baptized in Ceylon by the Tamil Cooly Mission.

Bangalore Cantonment continued to attract Tamil people, and the little church which the first missionaries had planted grew year by year, and at the beginning of this century was able to support its own ministry. From the Bangalore Tamil church, the work of the Wesleyan Mission spread to the Kolar Gold Fields, where hundreds of labourers from South India were employed in the mines. The growth of this church has been even more vigorous than that of the Bangalore Tamil church, and to-day it supports its own minister and evangelists.

The Tamil work in the Mysore State has now spread to the very heart of the Kanarese country, where hundreds of Tamil coolies are working on the coffee estates in the West of the State. This part of the state has been called 'The Brahmin's Holy Land', because it contains the great temples of Halebid and Belur, the throne of Sankara at Sringeri and the sources of several holy rivers. It was therefore an unpromising ground for missionary activity. But the areca nut, for which the region (known locally as the malnad) is famous, gave it trade connections with Wallajah and Arcot in the Tamil country. When coffee was first planted on the Baba Budan mountains, a Muhammadan merchant from Vellore was among the first planters. He brought Tamil labourers from his village. These coolies passed on to other estates, and now many of the coffee planters rely on Tamil labour. Among those going to and from their villages in North Arcot and Chittoor there were often a few Christians from the American Arcot Mission.

The life on the coffee estates, however, was not an easy one for new village Christians, and for many years the Mysore missionaries were unaware of the presence of these Christians. About 1928, there lived on a coffee estate near Hassan a Christian man from Chittoor. He was irregularly married to the daughter of the pariah priest, but something moved his heart, and he put himself in touch with the missionary at Hassan. He then persuaded the pariah priest and some of his relatives to put their idols on the rubbish heap, and to prepare themselves for baptism. Each year this little Christian community grew. They settled down and bought land near the coffee estates, and in an area where Mission work seemed unable to make any progress, a beautiful little church was built.

Some of these Tamil Christians in the Hassan District went forty miles to the north, and settled on the coffee estates in the Baba Budan mountains. These Christians brought the missionary more frequently to Chikmagalur, a station from which the Wesleyan Mission had withdrawn its European missionary in 1918. Other baptized Christians of the American Arcot Mission were found working on these hills, and the work among them began to yield a small harvest of baptisms. A missionary was sent to Chikmagalur in 1935; the work, which had been carried on by an Indian evangelist, was strengthened and began to give great encouragement. The work on the coffee estates and in the town church has revived and there have been baptisms among the local Kanarese people. This is a small example of how the dispersion of the Tamil church has not only led to mission work being attempted in other parts of India, but has brought about the revival of work in difficult and unfruitful areas.

## The Telugu Country

Telugu is a language spoken by twenty-six million people in South India, that is to say by six million more people than the Tamil language. Early in the 19th century there was a Surveyor of the Department of Public Works who lived at Cuddapah. His name was William Howell. He gathered together a Christian congregation in the town, and in 1822 the London Missionary Society took over this work and made Mr. Howell their missionary. In 1842 he left Cuddapah and joined the Church of England. A congregation of about a hundred souls, some Tamils from other parts and some Telugu converts, asked the Rev. W. W. Whitford, the chaplain of Poonamallee, to visit them.

About this time there were two brothers of Tamil origin, Basil Wood and Alfred Wood. When Mr. Whitford left the country they carried on the work at Cuddapah without any support from other sources. They sent an appeal to both the Bishop of Madras and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel asking that a clergyman might be stationed in Cuddapah, and proved their sincerity by twice making the journey of 150 miles by road to Madras.

In 1849 the Rev. Uriah Davies was sent by the Additional Clergy Society to minister to the English congregation at Cuddapah. He also undertook mission work, and sent Basil and Alfred Wood to preach in the villages. The first fruits of the mission were gathered at Rudravaram, a village 54 miles north of Cuddapah, and the Mala community put themselves under the instruction of Alfred Wood. The movement spread and in 1854 the work was taken over by the S.P.G. The Rev. J. Clay was stationed at Mutyalapad, and this became the headquarters of their mission in the Telugu country. By 1859 there

were 619 baptized Christians. In 1858 Basil Wood had crossed the Nallamalla hills and preached in the villages of the Sagileru valley. Ten years before a headman of one of these villages had listened to the preaching of Alfred Wood at Cuddapah, and received his brother gladly. Basil Wood became a teacher there, and a year later thirty-one people were baptised. In 1861 the S.P.G. opened a mission station at Kalasapad. Alfred Wood passed away in 1862 at Mutyalapad, but his brother lived for many years, watching the gradual growth of the Christian community around Kalasapad, until at the time of his death in 1898, there were 5,617 Christian adherents. Much of the progress of the mission was due to the pioneer work of these two Tamil brothers.

In 1875 a branch station of this mission was opened at Kurnool and ten years later a missionary was sent to Nandyal to establish a training college for native agents. The impossibility of supplying the spiritual needs of thousands of scattered Christians by means of three or four European clergy emphasised the need for an Indian ministry. In the Telugu mission, before the Telugu church could bring forward its own candidates for ordination, the first clergymen were Tamils by birth, and the first Telugu clergyman was not ordained until 1897. In 1900 there were eight Indian ministers in the S.P.G. Telugu mission, of whom three were Telugus and five were Tamils. The story of this mission illustrates how Tamil Christians were used by God not only to bring the Gospel to the Telugu country but to build up the church there.

The Mass Movement in the Cuddaph and Kurnool Districts flowed faster at the start than the other movements in the Telugu country, and reached the height of its flood at the end of the last century. It has since been surpassed by other wonderful movements. But in 1920, it joined its waters with another

great river, which in 1903 sprung from the very heart of the Tamil Church. Certain Tamil Christians of Tinnevelly determined to start a Missionary Society of their own and chose as their field the eastern corner of the Nizam's Dominions, around the tiny village of Dornakal.

The Tinnevelly Missionary Society was started on 12th of July, 1903, by a few earnest Tinnevelly Christians after very mature consideration and much waiting upon God in prayer. A series of special missions and meetings, dating from 1887, had done much to develop the spiritual life of the people. The object of the society was to awaken in the Indian Church a sense of responsibility for the evangelisation of the unoccupied fields in India. During the course of the year Rs. 1,000 was collected and two men offered themselves for service. S. Pakianathan was sent out as the first Missionary in 1904. He arrived at the C.M.S. station of Khammamett and stayed there for a time studying Telugu.

When the Indian Missionary Society of Tinnevelly first started work at Dornakal, there was little in the place except a railway junction, which had been built there for purely topographical reasons. Houses were few, and all around were teak forests which abounded in tigers. There was a barricade around the railway station, and for fear of the wild beasts nobody was allowed out between nightfall and dawn. During the daylight, the missionaries left their families within the barrier, and crept out to preach the Gospel. Even today there is no road of any kind in Dornakal, and only during the last five years have bicycles ventured on to its tracks.

The booklet published for the Silver Jubilee of the Diocese of Dornakal in 1937 gives a vivid account of the small beginnings of the work there. 'A beginning was made in one building—a derelict brewery of all

places—part as the missionaries' residence, part as a Church, and soon part as a school. Land was acquired, which being still wild jungle was cheap and easily procured. . . . The land which they bought with so much faith in the day of small things has since proved most useful for the central buildings of one of the largest dioceses in the Anglican Communion. So gradually the magic name of Dornakal began to be noised abroad. Its first recorded appearance in print in England was on September 7th, 1906, when the *Church Times* contained the following interesting, almost prophetic, notice: "An unique event in Indian Church history took place on Friday, August 3rd, when the Bishop of Madras baptized twenty-three converts at a little Deccan village named Dornakal. They were the first-fruits of the Mission of the Tinnevelly Indian Christian Missionary Association . . . . and over 300 people under instruction are the result of work begun only in 1903. The Bishop also dedicated a Mission-house, and after the dedication he said he hoped that this was the beginning of a mighty work." It has indeed been so.'

Like other Missionary Societies, the Tinnevelly Society needed a Home Secretary. From its early days that office was filled by Mr. Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah, who was also one of the secretaries of the Y.M.C.A. His grandfather was one of the early converts of the C.M.S. work at Megnanapuram in Tinnevelly, and his father, after being a teacher and catechist in the same Mission, was ordained in 1869. But Samuel Azariah never worked under any of the English Missionary Societies, and when he left college, he was connected with the Y.M.C.A. for thirteen years. Taking part with Mr. Sherwood Eddy in many missions and conventions in India and Ceylon, he became known as one of the ablest and most earnest speakers in South India. But in 1909 he gave

up his connection with the Y.M.C.A and offered himself for direct missionary work in the jungles of Dornakal.

During Samuel Azariah's first days in Dornakal, he lived in a tent, and afterwards he and Mrs. Azariah brought up their little family in a two-roomed cottage. Such were the beginnings of the Dornakal Mission. When Dr. Whitehead became Bishop of Madras in 1899, a conviction started to grow that the large and increasing Telugu Missions required and deserved their own bishop, and that in an area where Indian Christians were so many and English Christians so few, the new Bishop must be an Indian. As the work of the great societies, C.M.S. and S.P.G., had grown and spread, there had sprung up on the outskirts and as it were, right in the centre of their work, the work around Dornakal connected with the Tinnevelly Missionary Society. Naturally Dornakal suggested itself as the seat of the new bishopric. Also, if Dornakal seemed to be the right centre for the Diocese, there was already at Dornakal the right man to be Bishop.

On December 29th, 1912, all the bishops of the Church of England in India met together and laid their hands upon Vedanayagam Samuel Azariah, setting him apart for God's service as Bishop of Dornakal and as first Indian Bishop of the Church. The new Diocese was only small, comprising the south-eastern part of the Nizam's Dominions, with one English priest and some half dozen Indians, but from the beginning the new Bishop assisted the Bishop of Madras in episcopal work in all other parts of the Telugu country. And the Diocese grew rapidly in area and numbers. In 1919, the C.M.S. district of Dummagudem was added to it by the resolution of the Episcopal Synod. In 1920 the Mission Districts of C.M.S. and S.P.G. throughout the Telugu

Country were placed under the jurisdiction of the Bishop. The whole Anglican population of these districts is now 220,000, of which 12,000 are the fruit of the labours of the Indian Missionary Society of Tinnevelly around Dornakal.

On January 14th, 1915, Bishop Whitehead laid the foundation-stone of a church, consecrating the ground on which the Cathedral stands today. Work was not however begun till 1919, and the Cathedral was not consecrated until January 6th, 1939. The Christians of Tinnevelly were always passionately devoted to church building enterprises, and began to subscribe to the Dornakal Cathedral from the year 1915, and money was slowly but steadily coming in through the Indian Missionary Society of Tinnevelly. The interest and generous co-operation of the Tamil people in Burma, and the Straits Settlement were won. The work itself was carried out under the supervision of the Tinnevelly Missionary Society, but those who had seen the Cathedral at every stage in its development, had to pause, when, arriving at Dornakal on the evening of January 5th, 1939, they saw the finished structure. It seemed to shine forth and dominate everything. Every train brought fresh visitors. The Bishops of Madras and Nagpur; Bishop Hobson of Ohio, Bishop Thompson of Iran, Bishop Bennett of Aortearoa (N.Z.), Bishop Johnson, the assistant Bishop of Sierra Leone, Bishop Tarafdar, the assistant Bishop of Calcutta, and the Bishop of Guildford were all present. Among the distinguished visitors were Dr. J. R. Mott, and Rev. W. Paton who were in India for the Tambaram Conference. Many distinguished Christians of the Tamil Church were present. On January 6th (The Festival of the Epiphany), the Cathedral was dedicated by the Metropolitan of India, and named 'The Cathedral Church of the Epiphany'.

In a statement the Bishop of Dornakal said 'The fact that the Church was located in an Indian State where the Indo-Saracenic architecture was becoming the rule for public buildings, combined with the fact that the Christians were of the Dravidian racial type, suggested the Dravidian pillars and the Saracenic domes. The capitals on the pillars are of Hindu origin. The drooping conical banana bud of the capitals, issuing out of the open flower of the deadly nightshade, the "*datura*" plant, symbolise "*life out of death*". The plantain tree propagating itself from the same root signifies ever-continuing life; the nightshade signifying death. By inscribing the Cross and Lotus on the pillars we have captured the symbolic representation of the divinity familiar in South India for our Saviour—Who out of death brought eternal life, and ever lives to communicate that life to his followers.' Towards the cost of this wonderful building the Indian Missionary Society in Tinnevelly and its friends in the Dioceses of Madras, Rangoon, Colombo and Singapore have given nearly a half.

On the Sunday which followed the new Bishop of Tinnevelly, the Rev. Stephen Neill, was consecrated in Dornakal Cathedral, thus linking by another bond, the Tamil and the Telugu mission fields.

The great in-gathering of souls in the Telugu country has been shared by other missionary societies. The Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, now known as the Methodist Missionary Society, although later in the field than the Anglican Societies, has reaped a tremendous harvest of souls among the Telugu people of the Nizam's Dominions. Their work in this State was at first a branch of the work around Madras, and in 1878 the Rev. William Burgess went to Secunderabad to visit some Wesleyan soldiers who were stationed there. He returned again next year, and received a petition from the Tamils of

the Scottish Church,[1] who had been told that they could no longer be supported. They asked Mr. Burgess to take them under his care. In addition to the military work, this was sufficient reason for him to establish the mission in Secunderabad, because he was feeling more and more strongly the pull of the regions beyond, the great unoccupied areas to the North and East of Secunderabad. The Madras Synod then sent a Telugu speaking catechist, and the work among the Telugu people was opened out.

As the work grew, Telugu speaking ministers were sent from Madras, and two of them, Benjamin Wesley and George Harding were most able men, and had more to do with the starting of the work than any European missionary. Later, when the Rev. C. W. Posnett joined the mission, and the great work around Medak was begun, one of the most outstanding Indian ministers was a Tamil from Madras named Marijose Samuel.

When, twenty-five years ago, it was felt necessary to extend the mission beyond the Godaveri, this work was supported by the other branches of the Methodist Church in South India, and the work was superintended by Tamil ministers from Madras, of whom the first was Rev. P. J. S. Appadurai. He did the work of a pioneer missionary in the Nirmal mission.

There are many other instances of Tamil Christian

[1] This congregation broke away from the S.P.G. Church in 1860. In 1841 the chaplain, the Rev. W. W. Whitford, whom we have seen was instrumental in starting the S.P.G. work in the Cuddapah field, gathered a little band of Tamil Christians in Secunderabad. In 1842 the S.P.G. stationed a Tamil clergyman, the Rev. N. Paranjody, in Secunderabad. He must have been one of the first missionaries to work in the State of Hyderabad. In 1855 a new Mission Church was consecrated in Secunderabad. In the meantime, Mr. Paranjody had begun to officiate weekly at a Church in Hyderabad City, and in 1855 reported his first convert from Islam. He remained in charge of the mission until 1861. In 1862 another Tamil clergyman, the Rev. A. Taylor, arrived from his successful work among the Tamils of Mauritius (p. 54), and built the church at Chudderghat.

soldiers and followers of the army having taken the Gospel with them to other cities of India. In Belgaum, the commanding officer asked the London Missionary Society at Bellary to send a missionary who could work among the troops. Mr. Joseph Taylor, and two Tamil assistants were sent there in 1820. These two men rendered very valuable help, and by 1850 upwards of 400 natives had been baptised, of whom more than half were adults, chiefly Tamil people. In 1830 their labours were extended to Dharwar, and the work there was continued by the Basel Mission.

In Calcutta, services for the Tamil Christians were started at St. Saviour's Church in 1860. In Bombay the Tamil work of the S.P.G. started when two special services for Tamil people were arranged in Trinity Church in 1862 by two Madras missionaries who were passing through Bombay. We are told that the Tamil Christians were affected even to tears 'by hearing for the first time since they left their Presidency (Madras) the Church Service and sermons in their own vernacular'. In 1866 the work was placed under the charge of a Tamil clergyman, the Rev. J. St. Diago, who made his headquarters at Kamatipura. In 1894, a new branch of the Tamil mission was started at Dharavi, where many Tinnevelly Tamils came to work in the tanneries. This mission grew spontaneously, and the Christians there became noted for their generous giving.

In Poona, the Tamil people were gathered into a Church by the Rev. J. St. Diago, who arrived from Bombay in 1868. To-day, it is the tendency of the Tamil Christians, living in the cities of North India, to attend the English services, and to take quite a prominent part in the life of the churches where they worship.

Over fifty years ago, some Tamil Christians from

Tinnevelly went up to the Bastar State to work among the Koi people. The work in this part was an offshoot of the C.M.S. work at Dummagudem, and it is well known that it was started with the help of the European officers engaged in irrigation work on the Godaveri River in 1860. Twenty years later one of these officers, who had in the meantime become General Haig, volunteered to go out and take charge of the Godavari mission during the furlough of the missionary in charge. The General formed a plan to extend the mission northwards into the native state of Bastar, and for this purpose asked the Tinnevelly Church, through Bishop Sargent, to send Tamil evangelists. Three men were to be sent and the Tinnevelly Church undertook to support them. Actually only two men set out. One died soon after his arrival, and the other was left without a companion, eighty miles from the nearest mission station. He wrote to Tinnevelly to have someone sent, but as the country was very unhealthy, no one would go. At last an old man, sixty years of age said, 'If no one will go, I will go!' Although this old man had never been outside his village before, he at once prepared to set out on a journey of nearly a month. He reached the headquarters and then found that he had left his little box of clothes behind him on the coast. They tried to persuade him to wait until his box came, but he said 'let me go; give me a guide, I must go', and at once set off through the jungle to join his brother worker.

Some months afterwards when a missionary went that way, the people of the district said, 'Who is this strange old man, who, whenever he comes has only two words to speak to us in our language.' This old man had only learnt two words in the Koi language, and these words were, 'Believe in Jesus', and he said them on every possible occasion. He spent about a year there, but at last got very ill, and had to be sent

back to his native place, which he had hardly reached when he died.

It remains to add that the worker to whom the old man went as companion proved a true apostle to the remote Malkangiri Taluq. As the long years passed the conviction grew upon him that he would be permitted to labour in that 'wilderness' the same length of time that the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. So it came to pass; he was spared thirty-eight years of service there, and then called to his heavenly rest and reward. During that time he had eleven horses devoured by tigers, and was using the twelfth at the time of his death.

# CHAPTER THREE

## THE TAMILS GO SOUTH

### CEYLON

In 1806 a learned chaplain of the Anglican Church, Dr. Claudius Buchanan, visited Ceylon. On the voyage across he was surprised to find that all the boatmen were Christians. Ceylon had recently been conquered by the British from the Dutch, and when Dr. Buchanan asked the helmsman what religion the English professed, he replied that he could not tell, only they were not of the Portuguese and Dutch religion. Dr. Buchanan learnt the reason for this reply when he landed.

The Portuguese and then the Dutch rulers of Ceylon had shown much zeal in propagating Christianity. The Dutch had erected schools, fine churches and manses, and had also forbidden the setting up of idols. Many of the inhabitants of Ceylon had embraced a nominal Christianity. But in the first year of British rule, we are told that three hundred heathen temples were erected in Jaffna alone, and thousands fell away from a profession of Christianity. The Dutch ministers went away, and their fine churches fell into ruins. Dr. Buchanan found Mr. Palm, a solitary missionary of the L.M.S. at *Tellipalli* near Jaffna, preaching in one of the old Dutch churches; and in Jaffna itself, 'the only Protestant preacher in the town of Jaffna is Christian David, a Hindoo catechist sent over by the Mission at Tranquebar'.

Now the story of the Christian David mentioned by Buchanan is of great interest, for not only was he the first Indian priest to receive ordination in the

Anglican Church, but he was a link between the old Danish Mission and the missionaries who came to India and Ceylon in the 19th century. He was born in India in 1771. His father had been won for Christ by Ziegenbalg, the first Protestant Missionary to India, and David was educated at Tanjore by the great Schwartz. In 1785 he charged the youth 'may God make you a useful harbinger to carry good tidings to your benighted countrymen'. Sometime after he became a catechist in the S.P.C.K. Lutheran Mission, and then he went to Ceylon.

The closeness of Ceylon to South India made it a profitable field for Tamil enterprise, and from the early days of Christianity in India, many Tamil Christians entered Ceylon. Schwartz was known to have visited Ceylon, although no work was established there. Christian David must have arrived at Jaffna soon after the expulsion of the Dutch in 1795-6. By the recommendation of a friend, the Governor appointed him superintendent of the schools, and he became a minister of the Christian people, who, when the Dutch left Ceylon, had been left without any pastoral care. St. John's Church, Jaffna, was in a state of decay, and the commandant of the garrison used to keep sheep and cattle in it. This was a great grief to Christian David. One morning he opened the door of the vestry and the sheep began to bleat. He knelt down and asked God to incline the heart of the commandant to give the church into his charge. He obtained it, had it cleaned and repaired and in that church continued to preach and administer the sacraments until 1841. At first he did this without even Lutheran ordination. Buchanan mentions that his chief ministrations were in the Tamil language, but he sometimes preached in English 'which he speaks with tolerable propriety: and the Dutch and English resort to hear him'. On Sunday Buchanan

went with the others to David's church 'when he delivered extempore a very excellent Discourse, which his present Majesty George the Third would not have disdained to hear. And this Hindoo supports the interest of the English Church in the province of Jaffna.' (*Christian Researches*, pp. 90-2.)

In 1814 the vanguard of the Wesleyan Missionaries to India reached Ceylon. The conditions for Christian work had changed for the better, and the Governor, Sir. R. Brownrigg, was active in founding schools and building churches, and otherwise promoting religion. Two of the missionaries occupied Jaffna. 'Here they received a highly gratifying visit from Mr. Christian David, a native Malabar Christian; a convert and personal attendant of the late celebrated Missionary, Swartz . . . . When Surgeon Moreton was at Jaffna, he presented Mr. David with several of Mr. Wesley's Sermons and Tracts; and among others, with "The Characteristics and Principles of a Methodist". From these, he had formed a high opinion of the Methodist societies, and received the Missionaries of that body as angels of God. He told Mr. Lynch, that he had for more than ten years, prayed that some Missionaries might be sent to Ceylon; and regarded their arrival as an answer to his prayers. He received every encouragement from Messrs. Lynch and Squance, who took him under their care; and he, in return, manifested a strong attachment to them, and afforded them every aid in his power in furthering the objects of their Mission. He was especially valuable in procuring for them assistance in the study of the Tamil language; and often accompanied them on their excursions to the adjacent parts, for the purpose of interpreting their addresses to the natives.' (*Harvard's Narrative*, 1823, p. 162). It was David's account of the departed glory of the great Tamil mission fields in South India, and the neglected state

of the Christians that moved Lynch to write home and ask permission to extend the mission to the mainland of India. And so the Wesleyan Conference of 1816 gave its permission, and Lynch sailed for Madras in 1817, and became the first Wesleyan missionary to labour in India.

David, however, was not altogether persuaded to be a Methodist, because the Bishop of Calcutta, Dr. Middleton, visited the island in 1816, and David waited upon him with a Tamil translation of the Liturgy. This the Bishop took away to Calcutta, and had it printed at the expense of the Governor, Sir Robert Brownrigg, and put into the hands of the Christian people. In 1818 four Missionaries of the Church Missionary Society arrived in Ceylon, and Mr. Knight settled in Jaffna, where, being anxious to start evangelistic work, he employed Christian David to preach once a week in his house.

In 1821 Bishop Middleton again visited Ceylon, and Christian David came forward as a candidate for ordination. He was unhappy about the strange irregularity, whereby he preached and administered sacraments in Jaffna under authority from the Government, although without any ecclesiastical ordination. The Bishop would gladly have granted his request, but by the terms of his patent, he was restricted from ordaining anybody born in India. He therefore deemed it right, although painful to his feelings, to decline to ordain David, who was, we are told by the Bishop 'sadly disappointed and hurt, to my great concern'.

Bishop Middleton was succeeded by Bishop Reginald Heber, who was much concerned by the reports that he received from Ceylon about the shortage of clergymen there. So after making enquiries about David, he called him to Calcutta in 1824, and ordained him deacon on Maundy Thursday. In a

letter written on May 27th he described David as 'the first-fruits of the Gentile Church in India, in the person of Christian David, a black catechist in Ceylon'. When David was ordained priest on Trinity Sunday, the Bishop wrote in his Journal, describing the ordination as a 'very interesting and aweful ceremony to perform . . . I had the satisfaction (though by me it was felt at the same time, in some degree, a terrible responsibility), of ordaining him Priest'. He was the first Indian to receive ordination at Episcopal hands. Could the Bishop have looked forward and foreseen the day when a Tamil Clergyman would be consecrated Bishop of Dornakal in that same Cathedral?

Meanwhile the American Missionaries had started work in North Ceylon among the Tamils, and in 1841, the S.P.G. commenced missionary work in the island. This was extended to other parts of Ceylon and grew as more and more Tamil Christians from South India entered the island. There are many stories of how these Christians were, in the early days, unsought and uncared for, and yet were able to preserve the Name of Christ and be the cause of fresh missionary ventures in His Name.

In the records of the S.P.G. we find the story of how a party of Tamil Christians, who must have settled in the island in the later part of the 18th century, were discovered fifty years later at Chilaw in 1846. They were weavers, and had sought refuge from the bitter persecutions which beset the young Church in India. They had been allotted a plot of land by the Dutch Government. They settled there and introduced the art of weaving. At the request of the District Judge, the Bishop of Calcutta stationed a catechist there. It is not surprising that some were living 'in a state of reckless sin from utter but irremediable neglect'. They were taken in charge by a

Missionary of the S.P.G. and we read he was much cheered by a gift of 100 copies of the Tamil Scriptures from the American Mission in the North of the island. In less than two years a great improvement was visible among these Christians, and in 1847 they were confirmed and Holy Communion was administered.

But of more importance is the story of the discovery of Christian workers on the coffee estates, which led to the beginning of the Tamil Cooly Mission in Ceylon. By the middle of the century coffee planting was in full swing, and abundant supplies of labour began to arrive from South India. One Sunday morning an English planter was astonished to hear hymn singing in the coffee store not far from his bungalow. Going to ascertain from whom it came, he found a hundred of his coolies gathered together, and, under the leadership of one of themselves, worshipping the True God in a strange land. Such gatherings were held on more than one estate, and Christian coolies regularly held services without minister or sacraments.

These circumstances became known to Mr. John Murdoch, the head of the Government Seminary in Kandy, who used to ride out over the week-ends and hold services for the planters. He himself discovered little groups of Christian coolies from Tinnevelly. He spoke about this to the Rev. W. Knight, who had come to Ceylon to inspect the work of the C.M.S. The idea occurred to them that Tamil catechists might be brought over from Tinnevelly to minister to the scattered bands of Tamil Christians, and at the same time evangelise their heathen relatives.

The co-operation of the planters was gained, and Murdoch went over to Tinnevelly and saw the missionaries and called for volunteers for Ceylon. In November 1855 he arrived back in Colombo with six workers and they proceded from Kandy to estates

where the planters had agreed to support them. All those who cared for the spiritual welfare of their coolies formed themselves into an association, undertaking to support the catechist and to provide small chapels and schools for worship and instruction. The work became known as the Tamil Cooly Mission, and was administered by the C.M.S. on, as far as possible, a non-sectarian basis.

For many years the Mission was in the charge of Rev. W. E. Rowlands. Compelled in 1884 to return to England for the good of his health, he returned to his work among the Tamil coolies of the tea estates in 1907 aged over 70, and gave more than ten more years of his life to the people he loved. The story of Padre Rowlands riding across the hills and valleys of the tea estates; sometimes in the blazing sunshine, sometimes in drenching rain, arriving at the planter's bungalow in the evening, opening his Bible and conducting family prayers; up at dawn and preaching to the coolies at roll call, down in the lines with the coolies; and all the time ministering to the Christians and preaching to their heathen fellow workers, has been admirably told by the Rev. R. D. Butterfield in his *Padre Rowlands of Ceylon.*

The figures of the Mission reveal a wonderfully steady progress. In 1856-7 there were 154 baptised Christians. By the end of the century, this figure had risen to 3,000, and in 1937 it was over 7,000. During the years of this century, the yearly adult baptism has averaged about 100. But figures can give no idea of the importance of this work, because these people were constantly going and coming to their own villages, and others crossed the sea to new fields of labour in Malaya.

There is a remarkable illustration of this in the report of the Wesleyan Mission in the Mysore Province for the year 1893. 'Chamrajnagar, like all Indian towns,

has its Pariah quarter. Forth from that, more than twenty years ago, went a young Kanarese man and his wife to seek a better sphere than their home afforded them. They found their way to Ceylon and began to work on a coffee estate. They were an intelligent and industrious couple and soon began to rise. From being a cooly himself the man was placed in charge of a gang of coolies and gradually reached the position of head maistry (overseer). This estate was regularly visited by the agents of the Church Missionary Society's Tamil Cooly Mission, and after some years the Kanarese man and his wife yielded to the influence of Christian teaching and were baptised. Years passed and they prospered. At last they began to think of the village they had left and their heathen relatives, and thought they ought to come back and tell them all they had themselves learnt. They heard that there was an evangelist at Chamrajnagar and put themselves in communication with him. He managed at last to secure a rented house right in the midst of their own people, and in the early part of this year (1893) Isaac Kangani, with his wife and eight others (children and grand-children), arrived at the home they had left more than twenty years before. He came back greatly changed—a man of substance, blessed with an interesting and educated family, and full of an earnest Christian spirit. His reception by his neighbours was a mingled one. Some were unfeignedly glad to see him, but the greater part held off in suspicion. From the first he took his stand openly as a Christian, and arranged for his daughters to be sent to our boarding school at Bangalore. In building a house he built also a school and invited his neighbours to send their children. His own married daughter with her husband, with their eldest boy were the first to enter their names as pupils, and when we last visited them, those three were sitting side by side

in the same class and were reading together with others the Life of Christ. Isaac . . . returned alone to Ceylon to complete one more coffee season and finally settle all his affairs . . . Some time after Isaac left his village, another man and his wife followed him, settled on the same estate and, like him, got converted. These two now represent a band of eleven adults, who also intend at once to return to Chamrajnagar. Their coming will give us a goodly band of Kanarese men, converted far away, and now returned to make their influence felt among their old neighbours.'

Missionaries who have laboured in a hard field like the Kanarese country realise the significance of such a story. Brahmin influence and the conservatism of the people make the reaping of the harvest a slow and laborious task. So the seed which was sown in Ceylon was long in bearing fruit. But the Gospel took root in the surrounding villages, and two men of Kastur, a village only five miles from Chamrajnagar heard the Gospel again on the tea estates of the Wynaad, and on their return to their village, were baptised with a group of 38 people in 1908 by the Rev. George Sawday. This movement, when we compare it with the other great Mass Movements in South India, has developed slowly, but there are now 1,400 Christians in that area who live in about twenty different villages. Within the last year there has been a great quickening of this movement. Some years ago it spread to members of the same community living on the other side of Mysore City, and there are several hundred Christians in a movement which is also showing signs of quickening life.

We believe that there must be other Mission fields where the work has been helped by the vigorous life of the Tamil Christians of the dispersion in Ceylon. One of the missionaries of the Tamil Cooly Mission

told how a Christian writer on one of the tea estates of Ceylon spent a large sum of money in buying a magic lantern and a set of slides so that he could go about showing them to the coolies, and speaking to them of the good things of Christ; and of a Christian overseer who built a small room and had it nicely fitted up with doors and windows. Day by day he gathered together as many as he could, both Christians and heathens, read God's Word to them and prayed. On being asked the reason he said 'God has taken six of my little children to Himself. Now I want to win six souls for Him.'

# CHAPTER FOUR

## THE TAMILS GO EAST

### Burma

The Tamils are the most numerous of the Indian people who have settled in Burma. They come from all over South India in large numbers. They are mostly clerks and officials on the railway and in the Post Office; but also domestic servants and coolies. Some of them are Christians, and since many of them came from the Tinnevelly District, their intense loyalty to the Church of England brought them under the care of the local chaplains in Burma. With the help of the S.P.G. the chaplain found a Tamil catechist to care for the Tamil Christians, and there are now strong Tamil Christian congregations in several parts of Burma. It is of great interest to note that the loyalty of the Tinnevelly Christians to their Church, and the help which the S.P.G. gave to the chaplains have been the means of establishing Tamil congregations not only in Burma, but in Malaya and the cities of North India.

In Moulmein an excellent work was started in 1860, among the Tamil Christian immigrants by David John, a catechist who worked under the direction of the chaplain and missionaries. The first missionary of the Anglican Church to the Burmese had only arrived in 1859. The impression made among the Burmese was only slight, and the claims of other mission work was so great that the work was discontinued in 1879. Nevertheless the Tamil mission went on, and when the S.P.G. again stationed a missionary at Moulmein, there were only three or four Burmese

Christians, but the number of Tamil Christians was considerable. Within two years of the arrival of the new missionary, forty converts from Buddhism had been gathered and a large school established. 'Seldom in the history of missions has there been so rapid and effective a revival of lapsed labour.' In 1890 candidates from the English, Tamil and Burmese congregations were confirmed together, the service being tri-lingual.

The S.P.G. Mission in Rangoon was initiated by the chaplain, and the missionary visited Rangoon from Moulmein in 1863, and collected a sum of money with which the mission was started. In 1867 forty Tamil boys were reading in the mission school. Until 1878 the work among Tamils was carried on by a catechist under the direction of the missionary to the Burmese. In that year, to the delight of the one hundred and thirty Tamil Christians, their teacher, Samuel Abishekanathan, was ordained deacon. This was the first ordination held in Burma.

Bishop Titcomb, the first Bishop of Rangoon, took a great interest in the Tamil Christians. Their love and gratitude to the Bishop greatly delighted him. His book *Personal Recollections of British Burma* speaks most appreciatively of the Tamil Christians. He paid a tribute to the great linguistic abilities of the Tamils, and goes on to say 'It is the fashion throughout Burma to run these people down as miserably degraded and ignoble. Yet without reason. . . . they are proved by experience to be capable of receiving the truths of Christianity, and are not without excellent points of character. Among them may be named trustworthiness, gentleness, and warm hearted affection, to all of which I can bear personal testimony.' (P. 30.) At the ordination of Samuel Abishekanathan he wrote 'It would be impossible to express the delight of the Tamil Christians in thus receiving a clergyman

of their own race to minister among them. Nor was my own pleasure less. for I am persuaded that it is only through the development of a native pastorate we shall be able to extend mission work upon any sound and proper basis, or to raise up native Christians into habits of self-reliance and strength.'

The Tamils made arrangements for the erection of a church of their own, and contributed Rs. 1,000 towards the cost of St. Gabriel's and undertook to provide a fair proportion of the pastor's stipend. The Tamil congregation was swelled by the arrival of Telugu Christians, and in 1903 there were 1,088 adherents and 632 communicants. St. Gabriel's Church was enlarged in 1926.

At Mandalay a Tamil mission was begun in 1889, and there were also Tamils at Toungoo, the head of the Karen country. We find that one of the early missionaries of the S.P.G. to the Karen people was the Rev. J. Kristna, a Tamil. He was the son of a commissioned officer in the Madras army and was left by his father in the charge of Dr. Marks at the new college at Rangoon when he was transferred back to India. Several years later the youth asked for baptism, and was afterwards ordained a priest in 1881. He was a good school master and an excellent linguist. He preached to the British soldiers at Toungoo and to the Tamil and Telugu Christians, and also to the Burmese and the Karens in their own language. He died in 1898.

But a still more remarkable instance of a Tamil Christian becoming a missionary to other peoples can be found in the story of a Tamil convert from Madras, Mr. V. Solomon, who became a catechist in the Nicobar Islands. They are not a great distance from the Andaman Islands, and after a convict establishment had been started on the Andamans, the resident

chaplain formed the idea of winning some of the aboriginal islanders for Christ.

It was a bold venture, and there could have been little in the missionary history of the Nicobar Islands to encourage him. Indeed, it was one of the saddest chapters in the story of Christian enterprise. Between 1768 and 1788 twenty-four of the Moravian missionaries who had set out from Tranquebar laid down their lives, eleven in the island, and thirteen on their return to Tranquebar. Finally, when the devoted band had been reduced to one, as it had several times before, it fell to J. G. Haensel to make the final arrangements for departure, and for the abandonment of the mission. 'Words', he wrote 'cannot express the painful sensations which crowded into my mind while I was thus executing the task thus committed to me . . . . I remembered the numberless prayers, tears and sighs offered up by so many servants of Jesus, and by our congregation in Europe for the conversion of the poor heathen and when I beheld our burial ground, where eleven of my brethren had their resting place as seed sown in a barren land (thirteen also died on arrival in Tranquebar) I burst into tears and exclaimed "surely all this cannot be done in vain!" Often did I visit the place and sat down and wept at their graves.' The evil climate, the jungle, the dark superstition of the Nicobar natives had hitherto won in the struggle with the Cross of Christ.

But Solomon succeeded where three previous missionary expeditions had failed, and established the Church of Christ on the Nicobar Islands. In 1885, at the request of the chaplain, the S.P.G. established an orphanage for aboriginal boys on the Andaman Islands. In the following year this work was entrusted to Mr. V. Solomon from Madras. He observed that the Andamanese race was rapidly becoming extinct and persuaded some Nicobar parents to send their children

to his school. Soon his house was full of Nicobar boys. His method of introducing the Gospel into the Nicobar Islands was to teach the boys to repeat over and over again in their own tongue short Scriptural passages on the goodness, love and holiness of God, and especially of His loving-kindness in the gift of His Son. When the boys went home at the end of their school life, these passages were repeated in many a Nicobar hut, where the blood of pigs and fowls had been sprinkled in the fear of demons.

Solomon usually took them back, and personally restored them to their parents on the Nicobars. He had the use of the government launch, and the children were all uniformly dressed, and paraded on shore. The whole island went *en fête*. Solomon then held school for two hours, and the parents were gratified to see that their sons had learnt to read, and Solomon always gave a practical demonstration of the way they obeyed the commands he gave them in English.

During these visits, Solomon acquired many items of curious information about the habits and thoughts of the Nicobarese, which he communicated to his chaplain. The chaplain in turn communicated them to the readers of the *Mission Field* (November 1888). Solomon found the people mild in disposition and easy to manage, and was encouraged to take his school to the Nicobars, and started a mission station on Car Nicobar, the largest of the islands, in about 1897. He stayed there until his death in 1909, by which time he had gathered a Christian community of 128 souls. At his death a remarkable obituary notice was written by Mr. W. W. D'Oyly, Deputy Superintendent of the Andaman and Nicobar Commission.

'The death on November 22, 1909, in Rangoon, of Mr. V. Solomon, Tamil Catechist in charge of the S.P.G. orphanage at the Nicobar Islands, on his way

to Madras on leave, is a great loss that will be felt by all the inhabitants of Car Nicobar, where Mr. Solomon resided; by the natives, both Christian and heathen; by the foreign traders; and by the Government.

'Mr. Solomon's services in the cause of Christianity and civilisation have been invaluable. He was sent at the beginning of the year 1896 to start an orphange at Car Nicobar, the most important island of the group, containing 3,500 natives out of a total population of 6,000, and was at the same time appointed Government Agent for the islands and observer of a Meteorological Observatory then erected at Car Nicobar.

'Mr. Solomon had previously been for many years in charge of an orphanage for Andamanese at Port Blair, to which Nicobarese boys were also admitted. It was found that this institution would better serve its purpose at the Nicobars, owing to the dwindling population of the Andamanese, their incapability to receive intellectual instruction, and the difficulty of preventing the boys under instruction from coming and going as they pleased; while the Nicobarese boys, who come of an intelligent race, capable of useful instruction, were away from their homes. . . .

'All the inhabitants of Car Nicobar had got to regard "Sol", as they nicknamed him, as their father, and were ready to do anything for him; they went to him for advice in all matters, and referred all disputes to him. His example has induced many of the islanders to embrace Christianity, or if not actually to become Christians, to give up the barbarous and superstitious customs of their own religion, which is regarded as a kind of animism.

'Mr. Solomon has made a thorough study of the Nicobarese language, customs, and habits, and his reports thereon were considered so valuable ethnolo-

gically as to be sent to the Royal Society for publication.

'The number of Nicobarese converted by him to Christianity amounts to 128, of which twenty-eight are children in the school, nineteen boys and nine girls. Besides the 128 Christians, many more of the islanders have been led to abandon their savage customs, to cultivate vegetables and fruit for their consumption, to drink tea instead of tari, to sew and to do carpentry. Their former customs of infanticide, devil murders, felling coconut trees on the death of their owner, dragging about the bodies of deceased persons, burying them with live animals and so on, have altogether been given up in the principal village of Mus, where the mission station is.

'Cattle, goats, and fowls have been imported by foreign traders, after the introduction by Mr. Solomon himself, and good roads have been made. Mr. Solomon has reduced the native language to writing, and has translated into it (in Roman character) the Liturgy, the Catechism, the Gospel according to St. Matthew (now published by the British and Foreign Bible Society), and a school vocabulary.

'Before his arrival in the island, traders were not allowed to remain on shore after their ships had left, owing to the murders that occurred, but now they live there safely all the year round and have several fine shops and houses.'

After Solomon died, his wife carried on the work with a girls' school. Other Indian catechists have lived on the Island, and carried on the work of the S.P.G. Mission.

## MALAYA

In 1856 or 1857, the English Church of St. Andrew's, Singapore organized a mission for the purpose of making the Gospel known to the heathen

around. They supported this entirely by voluntary contributions, and by 1859 some sixty Chinese and Tamil converts had been gathered into a little wooden chapel. Chinese and Tamil catechists worked under the direction of the Government chaplain. Although the S.P.G. sent out a missionary in 1861, the work was left from 1866 to 1872. When another missionary, the Rev. W. H. Gomes arrived, he found one Chinese catechist at work, and the Sunday service very poorly attended. The Tamil work had been given up and the mission was in debt. Mr. Gomes held services in three languages, Malay, Chinese and Tamil, and soon he gathered a good staff of teachers who worked under him. The population of Singapore was always changing, and it was difficult to calculate the numerical results of the mission. Chinese and Tamils resided there and passed on to other places in which they had found work. Nevertheless, up to 1890, the S.P.G. mission in Singapore numbered 356 baptisms, most of which were adults.

Meanwhile, the Methodist Episcopal Church of America had decided to send missionaries to Singapore, and Dr. Thoburn of India visited the town in 1885 to start the mission. He held a week of special services in the town hall, and quite a number of Tamils were present at these meetings. Many of them were Christians from South India and Ceylon. Mr. Oldham, the missionary sent to follow up this work, started to work among the Chinese. In 1887, G. W. Underwood, a young Tamil, educated by American missionaries in Ceylon, came to Mr. Oldham and suggested doing work among his own people. He gathered the Tamil Christians into a congregation, opened a boys' school, and started to preach to the Hindus. When he heard that there were Tamils in Perak, he made a trip there and reported golden opportunities of work, and that, during his short visit,

there had been conversions. Shortly after, he fell a victim to pneumonia, and after his death the Tamil church in Singapore began to dwindle.

Nevertheless, mission work among Tamils soon spread to many parts of Malaya. In Penang, the Church of England chaplain had engaged a Tamil catechist in 1871. His name was R. Balavendrum, and the story of his life is of some interest, because it illustrates the connection between the beginnings of the Tamil work around Tanjore and the dispersion of the Tamil Church.

Mr. Balavendrum's parents and grandparents were baptized by Schwartz. His wife was a remarkable woman, who, in addition to Tamil, read Telugu, Kanarese and English, and was able to speak in Malay. While at the seminary in Tanjore, he became the personal attendant of the Rev. J. C. Kohlhoff, who was then very old and infirm. In 1850, he went to work in the Tamil mission at Secunderabad, and stayed there 12 years. He then went to Ootacamund, and in 1871 the call came to go to Penang. When he arrived, there were scarcely any Protestant Christians, and at his first service there were only five people in his congregation. He went here and there throughout Penang and the Wellesley Province seeking out Tamil Christians, and often had the joy of finding. In 1873 he started a boys' school, and not a year went by without gaining some new converts. He won the respect of the English residents, and in 1877 he was admitted to deacon's orders, and in 1880 he became one of the S.P.G. missionaries. In 1886 a mission chapel was erected, and in 1887 a Chinese department was added to the mission. Although many of the new converts did not settle long in Penang, Mr. Balavendrum knew some striking stories of converts who returned to India, and were able to gain their relatives for Christ.

The Methodist Episcopal Church also started work in Penang, and their teacher, Simon Peter, was ordained in 1894. The work spread to Ipoh and began among the Chinese.

We remember how G. W. Underwood visited Perak, and brought back the report of the opportunities there. Mr. Balavendrum, of the S.P.G., also visited Perak from Penang, and in 1892 an efficient Tamil catechist arrived from South India, Mr. A. Gnanamani, who was ordained in 1896.

At Kuala Lumpur, the capital of Selangor, the missionary in charge engaged a Tamil worker, Mr. R. O. Vethavanam, and he was ordained in 1900. In 1897, the Methodist Episcopal Church sent Dr. Kensett to start work among the Chinese of Kuala Lumpur. He was so impressed with the possibility of work among the Tamils, that he used to hold services in English for the educated Tamil Christians on the rubber estates, and often prayed for a qualified man to help in this work. This prayer was heard, and the Rev. Samuel Abraham, who had been ordained by the American Board of Missions in Ceylon, arrived, and found great favour. A church was built at Kuala Lumpur. In 1904 Samuel Abraham was released from his school work, and devoted all his time to pastoral work. All over Perak small Tamil congregations were gathered.

The Methodist Episcopal Mission work at Malacca was left without a missionary for ten years. The work was carried on by a Tamil, Mr. A. W. Thambyah, who we are told, voluntarily conducted services in English and Malay as well as Tamil. When a missionary arrived in 1920, the Chinese and Tamil churches began to flourish, and today there are Tamil churches scattered all round Malacca in the State of Johore.

In 1909 Malaya was made a separate diocese of the

Anglican Church, and Dr. C. J. Ferguson Davie, of the S.P.G. Mission at Rawalpindi, was consecrated Bishop of Singapore. In 1921 his wife, Mrs. Ferguson Davie, M.D., published a very interesting book about Malaya (*In Rubber Lands*, S.P.G.), in which she gives a very pleasing picture of the Tamil work in Malaya. She says that the largest missionary work among Asiatics in the diocese is carried on among the Tamils of South India. Although there are no European clergy who know Tamil, the work is carried on by five Tamil priests and six Tamil catechists. In many places lay readers conduct the services, for many of the Tamil Christians are highly educated. Although the majority of the Tamils are from the Church of England Mission fields in Tinnevelly, the best educated are the Ceylon Tamils. There are a certain number of Telugus in the Christian community. Seven per cent of the Indian population are Tamils. This compares favourably with the 3.8 per cent who are Christians in the Madras Presidency.

Among the Tamil Christians there is considerable evangelistic activity, and preaching bands do good work at various centres both among the Christians and non-Christians. On the rubber estates the help of the estate manager is gained, and the Tamil Christians erect their own chapels. When the padre is not available, the Sunday service is read by a licensed lay reader, and the people are kept in touch with Christian influence. The reports speak of a considerable number of baptisms year by year, but in recent years there has been a tendency in Malaya to replace Tamils in superior positions by Malays, and these conditions have cast some doubt upon the future prospect of Tamil work in Malaya.

It has always been the desire of missionaries to produce workers from among the immigrants. In 1924 the Bishop wrote 'There is, however, one weakness

in the work, which is to be deplored. Of these ten Asiatic clergy every single one is a foreigner, born or brought up either in India or China.' To the present writer, this is a source of strength rather than weakness. Among the Tamil people of the dispersion, the best work has been done either by men who came with the original immigrants, or who have come as missionaries from India to work among their own people. Long residence in a foreign land tends to cause a degeneration in the language, music and cultural inheritance of a people. A missionary who worked for twenty-eight years, first in British North Borneo, and then in Singapore wrote 'The deep things of God can only adequately be communicated through that person's own native tongue. Here is the supreme value of a well trained native agent.' Much of the success of mission work among Indians in Trinidad, where several generations have passed since the first Indians arrived, is due to the careful training of the agents, the use of *bhajans* and the vernacular form of divine worship. Where it is not possible to give the quality of training an agent would receive in India, it still seems desirable to gather workers from India; the bringing before Indian Christians of the needs of their people in other lands, and the calling out of missionaries from among them must have a powerful missionary influence upon the Indian Church.

# CHAPTER FIVE

## THE TAMILS GO WEST

### Mauritius

It is strange that, ecclesiastically, Mauritius should have been linked with Ceylon, as a part of the Diocese of Colombo. The first Bishop to visit it was Bishop Chapman of Colombo, who on June 15, 1850, reached Mauritius and wrote 'the Mission field is a wide one, no one can doubt, with a population of 50,000 of African origin, emancipated slaves and their families; and of 60,000 immigrant Indians, most of them are adults. Among these some catechists from India would be usefully and blessedly employed.'

One can find in the history of Mauritius some reasons for the neglect of this field up to that time. From 1715 until 1810 the island had been in the hands of France, and the influence of Catholicism which remained was very strong. Although it was captured by the English in 1814, and the whole group of islands became subject to Britain, no Protestant Chaplain was sent there, and until 1828 no church was built. The London Missionary Society made an attempt to start a Mission there in 1814, but were compelled to withdraw in 1833 as 'Mr. Le Brun's health had suffered much from the climate; and the state of the island was unfavourable to the successful prosecution of missionary labours.' Another attempt was made in 1834 when slavery was abolished in Mauritius, and the S.P.G. sent out money which had been raised by the Negro Instruction Fund, and through the Civil Chaplain established schools between 1836 and 1840.

But a much greater opportunity of missionary

work was found when thousands of Indian coolies from all parts of India began to arrive in Mauritius. The abolition of slavery had created great difficulties for the planters of the island, and workers were urgently needed for the sugar plantations. Among these Indian immigrants were a few Christians. During the last century many vessels to India called at Mauritius. Early in 1854, the Rev. Stephen Hobbs of the Church Missionary Society, and the Rev. Edward Hardey of the Wesleyan Missionary Society touched at Mauritius. Edward Hardey found his brother Samuel Hardey, a missionary from the Madras District, recovering his health there and he acquainted them with the opportunities for work among the Indians. Edward Hardey prevailed upon the Madras Auxiliary Bible Society to send there an agent to distribute the Scriptures among the people, and Stephen Hobbs presented the needs of the island to the Tinnevelly Mission.[1]

The result was that the Bible Society sent Mr. A. Taylor, with John Baptiste, a Tamil helper; and David Fenn, of the Tinnevelly Mission, who had fallen sick, went to Mauritius for the winter of 1854-5. Here he found Mr. Taylor, already ministering to a little band of Tamil Christians from Vediapuram in the Tanjore field of the S.P.G. work in South India. Fenn helped him in the services, and wrote to the C.M.S. Committee urging them to send a missionary to the island.

Meanwhile an Anglican Diocese of Mauritius had

[1] Edward Hardey also wrote to the Society in London, 'Our present residence is remote from the town where the Tamil people principally reside, so that I do not see so much of them as I could wish. The last two Sundays I have had Tamil service in our house, which although inconveniently situated, has nevertheless been pretty well filled. There is a spirit of enquiry, and a strong desire to hear the Gospel, so that I trust good will be the result. The poor Hindoos have certainly been very much neglected and no help has been afforded them from any quarter.'

been established, and the first Bishop, Dr. Vincent W. Ryan, was on his way. He arrived at Mauritius on June 11, 1855, and found much to encourage. Openings for the Church existed on every side. In Port Louis and all over the interior, Hindu camps presented a promising field for Missions, while 'our own scattered members are eagerly desirous of . . . stated and regular services'. The state of the Hindus was 'painfully interesting'. Men who had been taught and resisted Christianity in India had met with trouble in Mauritius, and without any seeking out by the Missionaries had come to them 'asking to be received into the Church of Christ'. Others had brought testimonials from missionaries, and some had never heard the truth until taught by the catechists. Especially Mr. Taylor's work gave much satisfaction to the Bishop for he described him as a 'devoted man, who had laboured among the Wesleyans, and left them with very honourable testimonials to his consistent and faithful discharge of his duties he had undertaken, and afterwards worked in a Mission belonging to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and has been employed for a year by the Madras Bible Society, with another to help him', and in another place, 'I felt what a blessing it was to have such a man here. Perhaps in all India, one more fit for just what there was to do at first, could not have been found.'

In the same year (1855), the Bishop ordained Mr. Taylor, and set to work to organize missions to the Indian coolies. In 1856, the C.M.S. decided to open work in Mauritius. They believed that, as in Ceylon, a large number of the coolies returned to their country when their term of service was over, and so their evangelization might have no small effect upon the evangelization of India. They transferred the Rev. Stephen Hobbs of Tinnevelly and Mr. Paul

Ansorgé of Krishnagar to Mauritius. Both had suffered in health in India, and now began work among the Tamil and Bengali immigrants in Mauritius. Many came under instruction and in due course received baptism. Statistics give no adequate idea of the work done by these first missionaries, because the majority of the converts returned to India. One of the captains of the ships that took them back told the chaplain 'they were not like the same beings: they went back quiet, reading, praying, instead of the uncivilized savages they were in coming'.

Mauritius grew in importance as a missionary centre. From it the new Anglican Mission to Madagascar was launched in 1863, and it was proposed to make Mauritius the base from which to start the C.M.S. work in East Africa. In 1866-7 two new Tamil deacons were ordained. In 1872 great encouragement was given to the Indian work by the consecration of Bishop Royston, who had worked for 18 years in the C.M.S. Tamil field in India.

By 1873, 2,000 coolies had been baptized, of whom half returned to India. We are told that a Persian merchant was baptized and became a catechist, and a band of Chinese Christians were ministered to. Within 40 years of the inception of the work there, 7,000 people had been baptized in the Diocese. Of these many returned to India, and some went to South Africa, where they became the nucleus of a Church which grew among the Indians in Natal under the care of Dr. Booth of the S.P.G. Mission (see p. 65). But the tide had clearly begun to flow the other way, and the Indian coolies were leaving the Island in larger and larger numbers. From the nineties of the last century, the Mission reports began to speak of the falling off in the number of baptisms, the decrease of members, and the tremendous difficulties under which the staff worked. Many evils began to

take root among the domiciled Indian community which made mission work increasingly difficult.

In 1875 Bishop Royston sent the Rev. W. B. Chancellor of the East African Mission to start a mission among the Africans on the Seychelles Islands, 1,000 miles away. This work was truly described by the Bishop as an offshoot of the Indian mission, and during the years of the present century it was to bear strange fruit. Seychelles became a sort of concentration camp for troublesome African kings and hither came Mwanga, King of the Baganda (the name given to the people of Uganda). His career had been a stormy one. He had been responsible for the murder of Bishop Hannington, and the blood of the Uganda Martyrs rested upon his head. When at length he fell into the hands of the British, he was transported to Seychelles. Before he died in 1903 he had been baptized and was truly penitent. The story is told how the Rev. H. W. Duta, the leading Uganda clergyman, preached in the Cathedral after the news reached him, and pictured Mwanga's arrival in heaven and Bishop Hannington meeting him with the usual salutation of the country 'How do you do, my friend?'. Kabarega, the King of the Bunyoro, was also transported to Seychelles, and in 1909, he was baptized by the Bishop of Mauritius, Dr. Gregory, who was visiting the islands.

A pagan king, addicted to human sacrifice, does not usually end his days as a Christian and a church warden, but this was the story of Nana Prempeh, the exiled King of Ashanti. His throne was the Golden Stool of Kumasi but in 1895 the British intervened in the affairs of his kingdom, and Prempeh was exiled to Seychelles. In 1900 he received a visit from the Archdeacon of Mauritius, the Rev. H. D. Buswell. The Archdeacon had been a missionary in Ceylon, and was sent to Mauritius in 1866 to work

among the Tamils there. Telling of his visit to Prempeh in his annual letter to the C.M.S. he says 'I ought to mention the arrival of Kings Prempeh and Asibi and other political prisoners from West Africa. I made their acquaintance as soon after their arrival as I possibly could, and, thanks to the good offices of the interpreter who accompanied them, have been able to do something among them. Some of them are getting in the habit of coming to church.' One day Prempeh told the Archdeacon that he wished to give his heart to God, and on the 29th of May, 1904, was baptized in St. Paul's Church, Mahé, Seychelles.

Archdeacon Buswell was able to serve Mauritius for many more years. In 1912, he celebrated his golden jubilee as a missionary; first to Ceylon, then to the Tamils of Mauritius, and after to peoples of every tongue and nation. He did not retire until 1919, but his last years were tinged with sadness at the continued decline of the work which had begun with so much promise. The C.M.S. gradually withdrew their workers and their support, and today the S.P.G. carries on the work in Mauritius and Seychelles, ministering in many tongues to a strangely varied community, of whom the Tamil people have become only a small part, and the Protestants are outnumbered by the Catholics nearly forty times. The C.M.S. *Outlook* for March 1939 contained a paragraph to say that on January 5, 1939, Archdeacon Buswell celebrated his hundredth birthday in Mauritius.

King Prempeh was confirmed on December 23rd, 1921, and took his first Communion on Christmas Day. This so moved the hearts of the other chiefs at Seychelles that they all asked for baptism, and were baptized on January 16th, 1922. He felt that the blessing of God had come upon him and gave his eldest son, John, to be trained for the priesthood.

The hand of God indeed seemed to be resting upon

him, for a few years later he was re-called to his native land, and returned in 1924. He was received by a great crowd, Christians and non-Christians joining together in singing 'All people that on earth do dwell'.

It was to a strange new country that he returned. The former enemies of the British Government had become its loyal subjects, and Prempeh's soldiers had become peasant farmers. His blood-stained and ruined fortress had become a stronghold of commerce, education and Christianity. The Wesleyan Mission and the S.P.G. had firmly established their work, and there was a large Christian community. One of his first acts on his return to Kumasi was to command all members of his family to put themselves under instruction for baptism. He identified himself with numerous Christian activities and in 1924 he took the chair at a Wesleyan missionary meeting. After living for two years as a private individual, he was restored as Paramount Chief of the Golden Stool. He was present at the reception of the Prince of Wales at Kumasi, and the respect shown to him by the Kumasi tribes was very obvious.

Meanwhile his son John had completed his training at St. Paul's College, Mauritius, and was ordained in March 1928 with two others, one an Indian, the other a Mauritian Creole. That Prempeh never forgot the debt he owed to Mauritius is shown by a letter which he wrote to the Bishop.

'I wish to express my very hearty thanks to your Lordship for all the great care you have taken of my son John, who has now been ordained priest by your Lordship. I often dwell upon in my thoughts my confirmation and first communion from your Lordship in far away Seychelles. Also I wish to place on record that I am deeply indebted to your Lordship for all your kind prayers and help that have resulted

in my being repatriated and also in my being enstooled as Kumasihene, or in other words, Paramount Chief of Kumasi. I learn with joy that John will soon be repatriated to Kumasi to preach in this land of which I am proud.' As a mark of his gratitude he sent the Bishop a gold model of his gold sword. King Prempeh died in 1931 and his son John is a clergyman in the Gold Coast.

### South Africa

On November 16th, 1860, the signalling station at the Bluff, the high promontory south of Durban, signalled the appearance of a steamer which proved to hail from India. She was full of Indian coolies, 'indentured', coming to develop the great sugar plantations running along the coast of Natal for hundreds of miles north and south of Durban. On January 6th, 1862, Rev. Ralph Stott, of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, with Mrs. Stott and family arrived at Durban. On January 28th he wrote to his committee 'I am happy to inform you of our safe arrival in Natal, for which we return our fervent thanksgiving to Almighty God. The first men that came off to the ship after we were anchored in the roads of Natal were eight Tamil boatmen. They were astonished when I began to speak to them in their own language, and wanted to know where I came from that I knew Tamil. I told them who I was and where I came from, and why I had come, and then began to preach Christ to them. They listened with great attention and expressed their pleasure at my coming amongst them.'

The Rev. Ralph Stott had begun his missionary life in Ceylon in 1829. He worked there for 18 years, where he proved himself to be a great evangelist among the Tamil people. When past 60 years he returned to the mission field and gave the rest of his life to work

among the Indian people. The flood of immigrants poured into Natal from all parts of India. Mr. Stott learned Hindustani, and was soon able to preach in it. In 1865 he wrote for a colleague, and specified among the qualifications needed, ability to master several languages, and plenty of rough riding. He mentioned the name of his son Simon who had gone as a missionary to Ceylon, and he was sent to join his father. He was, however, set apart for the English and Zulu work and we find Ralph Stott bearing the full burden of the exacting Indian work.

Stott set himself to master some of the vernaculars spoken by the immigrants, for while the first boat loads came from Madras, they were followed by coolies from nearly every part of India. Stott wrote that he felt that he was studying for all India, and preaching for all India. When he heard that the Society had contemplated giving up his work, he wrote 'If you had given it up, you would have committed a great sin against the thousands of coolies in Natal, and that are coming, and against the whole of India.' In 1874 he wrote 'coolies are pouring in very fast . . all from Calcutta'. In 1875 'We have now 10,000 coolies in Natal and are likely to have many more.' In 1877 'I shall be 76 on the 9th of November, and ought to pull up and have rest, but I cannot allow these thousands of Indians of every part of the country to die for lack of knowledge while I can ride and think and talk.' In 1878, after returning from a tour of 150 miles 'I must pull up soon. I am just finishing my 50th year as a Wesleyan Minister, and in November shall be 77 years old. Men are now pouring in from Madras.'

Ralph Stott did not pull up until his death which took place in 1880. A vivid picture of his apostolic labours is given in one of his letters 'On Sunday morning, finding I had a hard day's work before me,

I commenced early, and preached to six different parties located on six different parts of the estate, extending eight miles. Finding I had still daylight and strength, I rode ten miles to another estate and assembled the coolies immediately. After tea, the owner wished me to preach in English to his family. I did so, and I trust not without benefit.'

One wonders what were the results of Stott's work. He opened a church in 1877 for the Indian congregation in the west end of Durban; in 1883 there were only 38 members of the Wesleyan Mission in Natal. But numerical returns are least instructive as indicating the extent to which work done has been successful, and not a few Hindus returned to India from Natal to bear witness to the Christ they had found there. This hope seems to have animated Ralph Stott in his labours, for writing in 1870, he said 'The seed sown will not perish; it will spring up, and bear fruit unto eternal life. Some of it will spring up here. Some will be carried to India, not by the wind or the flood, but in men's hearts, and will spring up and come to maturity, and shake its seed into fresh ground, and thus spread and increase.'

This was a prophetic word because in the following year, a letter reached London from Rev. Samuel Dalzell, of the Wesleyan Mission in Mysore, which goes on to relate how a whole family, a man and his wife and four children had been baptized in Bangalore. They were the fruits of the cooly mission in Natal, and the man had returned with a letter of introduction from Ralph Stott. This letter commended him to the care of the mission in Bangalore, and stated that, if he had stayed a few weeks longer in Natal, he would have been baptized there.

This man was a Korama named Punyadas. The Koramas were one of the criminal tribes of South India. They were a nomadic people, wandering here

and there, carrying their homes with them on pack bullocks. They bore an evil name for theft and crimes of violence, and were unable to move from place to place without a police permit. They were called Kalla Koramas, or thieving Koramas.

Punyadas, however, was a man of great resourcefulness and honesty, and travelled around as the servant and bodyguard of a Brahman Guru. In 1861 his home at Krishnagiri in the Tamil country was visited by labour agents, and greatly daring, he and his brother with nine others went to Durban. He became an overseer in the municipality, and after ten years service, returned to India with honourable testimonials.

We have read how Ralph Stott went around Durban, preaching to the people in Tamil. He had many conversations with Punyadas who at length promised to become a Christian when he reached India. He carried back a letter from Ralph Stott to Thomas Hodson, the chairman of the Mission in Bangalore. We have read how he was baptized with his family. His children continued their education at mission schools.

After his baptism, Punyadas became a wanderer once again. He was a peon, then a maistry in the Public Works Department, and then a petty contractor. One day a missionary on tour met him selling spices in the market of Chikmagalur, one of the larger towns of the Mysore State. The mission had no worker there, and Punyadas was asked to become a Bible colporteur. He undertook this work with great success, and with his bullock cart and ready wit, he disposed of many Bibles and portions in the country around Chikmagalur. This, and the baptisms which followed, were the beginnings of the mission work in the present writer's circuit.

While travelling around selling books, he found

many of his own caste people, Koramas, and set to work to win them for Christ. Soon Devadas, a kinsman who lived near Banavar was baptized and Devadas' brother soon followed and became a teacher of the little Christian community which sprang up. In 1883 there were 11 adults, and 17 children. Punyadas retired there, and became the patriarch of the little community. The converts were basket-makers, but feeling the need for a more settled life applied for land near their village. A loan to buy bulls was given by the missionary, and a Christian colony was started at a place called Bommanahalli. Other baptisms followed. The new Christians displayed great evangelistic zeal, and journeyed many times to win another group of their people, living thirty miles away. But the experiment of Christian colonisation among them was less happy, and nearly the whole of the new community was wiped out by malaria. The movement among the Koramas was finally checked when another attempt at colonisation proved a failure.

Writing of this whole strange story, one of the Mysore missionaries said 'There is a providence in missions. God overrules events, which are often commonplace enough, for the spread of the Gospel. He makes openings, provides means, raises up men, and prepares instruments for carrying on his gracious work among different classes of people.'

When death stopped the labours of Ralph Stott, his work among the Indians was carried on by his son, Simon Stott. He was born in Ceylon, which he left at the age of twelve only to return many years later as a missionary. But two years later in 1865 he followed his father to Natal, where he laboured among the English and Zulu peoples until his father's death. Soon his Tamil came back to him, and he opened

another small church and several schools, and the work was gradually established.

Meanwhile, in 1877, the Church of England in Natal, through her Synod, began to take steps for the evangelization of the Indian immigrants, and the Vicar of St. Cyprian's, Durban, was the moving spirit. But later Bishop Macrorie was at a loss to find a priest to take charge of this work, and Dr. Booth, a Government Surgeon, volunteered for the work. His duty brought him into contact with the Indian immigrants, and he had been moved with pity for them, when he saw them arriving in a new and unfriendly country, and quickly won their affection by his sympathy and skill. At this stage the Indian work came under the care of the S.P.G.

Dr. Booth went to India for a short time to learn the language, and to see something of Indian mission work. Then he went to England for a course of theological study, and on his return was ordained deacon in Durban in 1883. When he took charge of the Indian mission, he not only laboured as a medical missionary but started schools in many places besides Durban and Pietermaritzburg, so that by the end of 1884 there were twenty-one Indian schools in Natal. He built St. Aidan's Church, Durban, and then enlarged it, and also built St. Paul's Church in Pietermaritzburg. In 1890 he visited India, and brought back two Tamil clergymen, the Revs. S. P. Vedamuthu and J. Nallathambi, who served their congregations in Durban and Maritzburg for many years. He discovered intelligent Christians among the immigrants, and made them teachers and catechists. Baptisms began to take place, even if in small numbers. But before the Indian work was completely organized Dr. Booth was compelled to leave Natal on account of his health.

Devoted lady missionaries did much for the Indian

women, and a girls' school and a girls' home were built. A fortunate sale of land in Durban enabled the Mission to move its girls' home and boys' high school to a charming place called Sydenham, 3 miles from Durban. The high school was rebuilt, and in 1904 became also a training college for Indian teachers. In 1912 St. Augustine's church in Durban was moved to Sydenham, and re-named Christ Church. In 1916 St. Aidan's Hospital for Indians was built, thus reviving the medical work of Dr. Booth. In 1923 there were 375 communicants, and 1,500 school children in the Indian work of the Church of England in Natal.

But these facts give little idea of the work done or the difficulties encountered. It was difficult to find European clergymen who were acquainted with the religious background of the Indian immigrants, but when the Rev. A. J. French arrived from Lahore in 1906, his coming greatly encouraged the Indian church, and under his leadership, the work rallied until his untimely death, for he was drowned while rescuing some of his Indian boys from the sea.

He realized that the work could not successfully be carried on without trained Indian workers, and wrote 'To expect results without catechists and evangelists who can mix freely with the people is vain. How else can the Gospel be preached among the heathen, or Churches be enlarged by the gathering in of converts?' He spoke of the great opportunity among the Indians herded into huge barracks, among the women and children idle during the day, among the vast crowds who gathered for the market on Saturday and Sunday, among the workers on the coal fields, and the prisoners in the jail, among the new arrivals from India, and the settled farmers up country.

As the years went by, it became apparent that the second and third generation of Indians in Natal did

not produce teachers and catechists with the same zeal as the early immigrants. Undoubtedly there was a deterioration of their religious and cultural heritage. Indians, we are told, forgot their native language and began to speak 'kitchen Kafir' and 'pidgin English'. Perhaps the truth was that they were unwilling to admit their knowledge of the vernacular, and were discouraged in the use of it. One European missionary stated that the language of newly arrived workers from India was too high to be understood by the Indians in the colony. Another missionary wrote in 1925, 'Indians have little idea of music as we know it, and Tamil music would be out of place here, for all the people speak English. Indeed some cannot speak Tamil at all.' It is indeed difficult to understand how Tamil Christians were able to maintain the tone of their spiritual life without singing their lyrics, and one cannot feel surprised that the Bishop of Natal felt moved to complain in 1919 that of the 140,000 Indians in Natal, the English Church had not a single agent who devoted himself entirely to the work of the Gospel.

Possibly the hearts of the people were hardening under the treatment they received from the other people of Natal. This is illustrated by an incident related by an Indian Christian. He was out preaching in the barracks where the Indian coolies lived, and one man interrupted him and said, 'You want me to be a Christian when the white people are treating us like dogs.' As one writer put it, 'they know that the European calls them "dirty coolies" or if they are clean and respectable they are called "these swanky coolies who want putting in their place"'.

Apart from Durban and Maritzburg, where they were fairly concentrated, the Indian Christians were scattered all over South Africa, generally in small groups of two and three families. Wherever they

were, the Church of England members were under the spiritual care of the vicars of the parishes in which they lived. They had the right to attend their parish church, but in most places, they felt that, although invited by the priest, they were not welcomed by the people.

And so to-day, the Indian Christians connected with the various Protestant churches in Natal are about 3,000, the majority of whom are Tamils. This story must give food for thought, and inspire us to pray that God will raise up, both from among our missionaries, and among the Indian Christians in South Africa and India, men who will revive the work in Natal among 165,000 Indians who are said to be living there.[1] But these words about the Tamil people in Africa would not be complete without the story of how a great missionary to Uganda, G. L. Pilkington, received a message from God through a little book which both changed his life and brought about a great revival in Uganda. The little book was not by a great English writer or preacher, but a tract on the Holy Spirit written by V. D. David, a Tamil evangelist of Tinnevelly and Ceylon, who was known in England as Tamil David. This story will be recounted in the Epilogue of this book.

[1] It is interesting to learn that the Anglican diocese of Natal is strengthening its Indian work and has sent over Mr. J. C. David, who is being trained for the ministry at a Theological College in the Tinnevelly diocese, and after training will return to be ordained in Natal for work among the Indians.

# CHAPTER SIX

## THE TAMILS GO TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH

### British Guiana

A traveller from British Guiana and the West Indies has left a very striking picture of the Indian people there. 'One has only to take a stroll in British Guiana or in the busy streets of Port of Spain, to meet multitudes of people who differ in every way from the West Indians. They are recognizable at first glance; both physique and dress speak of the East and not of the West. And yonder white building with a white cupola gleaming in the sunshine—that is unmistakably a Muhammadan mosque. Through the arched gateway one gets a vista of a little courtyard, with two or three grave turbaned men sitting cross legged in the shade reading from the sacred *Koran*. At the appointed hour of prayer they may be seen bowing with their faces towards Mecca. . . . Walk on a short distance and we shall come upon a building surmounted by a trident—the symbol of Hinduism. If the door is open we may catch a glimpse of the idol of some Hindu god, with lamps and offering laid before it, and possibly a Hindu "Holy man", ash-smeared and engaged in his devotions . . .' (F. Deaville Walker, *The Call of the West Indies*, p. 107.)

An interesting story lies behind this. A century ago, soon after the emancipation, the planters of British Guiana and Trinidad made a great experiment that was destined to influence profoundly the life of the two colonies. They imported large numbers of

coolies from India and Ceylon to supersede negro labour on the sugar estates. The coolies were brought over at Government expense for a five-year term of indentured labour which they could renew if they liked. At the end of ten years service they were entitled to a free passage back to India. The experiment was a success. For seventy years there was a steady stream of these 'East Indians' (as they were called to distinguish them from the West Indians). Large numbers of them sooner or later returned to their own country, but many found it easier to gain a livelihood in the new land, and elected to remain there. By industry and thrift they became able to purchase small plots of ground, build themselves houses —more or less in Indian style—and settle on the land of their adoption. Large numbers of them made for themselves a position that, by reason of their caste, they could never have obtained in their own country. Being allowed perfect freedom to pursue their own customs and worship, they built themselves numbers of temples and mosques, and they hold their Hindu and Muhammadan festivals. Today they form one-third of the population of Trinidad and nearly half that of British Guiana, while small numbers are found in Jamaica, St. Lucia and other islands. The majority speak Indian languages, chiefly Hindi, Urdu, or Tamil, but most of them know at least some English. There are also Chinese. One result of their presence is the extensive cultivation of rice; for even in the land of voluntary exile Indians must have rice and curry.

The presence of such multitudes of Indians offered an attractive sphere for Christian service. In 1848 a letter was sent to the Missionary Committee of the Wesleyan Church. 'Can you do nothing, Sirs, to meet the necessity which exists in this colony? I refer to the thousands of coolies which are being

brought here from India. Could a Minister address them in their own dear language, I am persuaded that his influence among them for good would be immense. . . . Could you not send a Missionary to us here able to speak in the language of India?'

This request was heard and in 1852, the Wesleyan Missionary Society sent out the Rev. John E. S. Williams (who had laboured for a while in the island of Ceylon) as a Missionary to the Hindu coolies of Demerara in British Guiana. But his ministry was a brief one for, we are told, 'On 17th of August 1853, he travelled to Berbice and preached at New Amsterdam a sermon of surpassing unction. The next day he was seized with yellow-fever; and on the 27th of the same month, he entered into the joy of his Lord, in the 32nd year of his age.'

For several years, nothing was done, but in 1860 the Rev. H. V. P. Bronkhurst arrived from Ceylon. He was a Eurasian by birth, who studied in Madras University and was a good Tamil scholar, and during his time in British Guiana wrote several most interesting books.[1] He found among the Tamil immigrants a few scattered Christian souls, and travelled up and down the sugar plantations preaching the Gospel. He must have learnt through hard experience that the missionary hope of easy victories for the Gospel among Indians in distant lands was an utter fallacy. In 1866 there were only 16 members, and in 1884 only 48.

When Bronkhurst died he left a little Christian community, many of whom were Tamils. But the character of the immigrants altered, for while the first arrivals were nearly all people from South India, the people who came later were from North India. For twenty-five years no successor to Bronkhurst was sent

[1] Esp. *British Guiana and Its Labouring Population*, 1883.

out, but the little Christian Community of East Indians attached to the Methodist Mission, held on.

At length in 1912, the Rev. H. M. Yates was sent. He found five or six of Bronkhurst's Tamil Christians, and was met by an aged and blind Tamil catechist, who received a tiny pension from Mission funds. The work began to revive in a most encouraging way. There began a long series of definite and individual conversions. Mr. Yates gathered around him and trained an effective band of catechists. The membership rose to over 250, and the places of worship rose from two to twenty-five. Most of the work was carried on in Hindustani, although English became the tongue of so many of the East Indians. Hindi *bhajans*, and the Hindi Liturgy and Communion Service are used. Mr. Yates mentions that during his time two shiploads of Tamil and Telugu speaking coolies arrived. He met the ships, and took the Christians who came on them under his care. He found among them a Tamil family which had received baptism in South Africa. The husband knew English, and became a great help to Mr. Yates, working among the Southern Indians. The note of Mr. Yates's work was that of earnest evangelism. He and his helpers were constantly preaching in the open air. Their work was done among a community where immorality, drunkenness, and gambling were very prevalent. In one place notorious for drinking and rowdiness, a number of the worst characters were converted and a church established.

Unfortunately Mr. Yates's health broke down in 1925, and he was forbidden to return to the colony. But his work has been continued, and the Church among the East Indians in British Guiana increases steadily. The work there is shared by the S.P.G. and the Canadian Presbyterian Mission.

The Canadians have a most successful work in

Trinidad among the Indians. Their work is in Hindi, and is among people who have come from North India. It is not possible to give a complete account of their work in this book. In Fiji, the Tamil Christians do not seem to have taken any part in building up the Christian community. There are now over 80,000 Indians in Fiji, of whom 1,655 are Christians. Most of these are people from N. India, and most of the South Indian Christians are Telugu people.

# EPILOGUE

## TAMIL DAVID AND THE REVIVAL IN UGANDA

At the C.M.S. School at Palamcottah in the Tinnevelly District, there was a mischievous and idle Tamil boy called David. After he left school he went to Ceylon and opened a liquor shop and became a boon companion of wicked men. He married a Christian girl, and to her prayers and influence he owed his conversion. He gave up his evil life and became a schoolmaster in a C.M.S. school in Ceylon. Some dozen years afterwards he experienced another change in his spiritual condition and realised the power of Christ through His Spirit.

In 1890, the Rev. George Grubb went to Ceylon to conduct a special mission, and David attached himself to the party as interpreter. He proved himself to be a teacher of uncommon spiritual power, and he accompanied Mr. Grubb and his party to Australia, and afterwards to England, where he spoke at Keswick. He was known as Tamil David, and a little tract written by him profoundly affected the life of G. L. Pilkington, a missionary in Uganda, and brought about a great revival in that country. This tract (*Have You the Baptism of the Holy Ghost? A Bible Reading* by V. D. David, Tamil Evangelist) gives very clearly the spiritual testimony of David.

David's story runs 'I was converted fourteen years ago, but my life was an up and down one, and a stumbling block to the world. There was no real testimony for Jesus in my life; I was not an instrument fitted by God for winning souls. But one night when

I was coming home from a meeting, a servant of God asked me why I did not consecrate my life to God entirely, so that I might be used by Him.

'I greatly wished to win souls for Christ, and I was not at once willing to put this into practice. My friend took me to his house. It was an upper room. I knelt before God. I think it was between eleven and twelve that night when I consecrated my life to God. Although I cannot tell the exact words I used, I am sure this is what I meant, "Oh Lord, here I give my all, my money, my work, my wife, my children. I hand them over to thee, and am willing to be anything, and to go anywhere." I did not keep anything back from Him, I was really honest with Him; I was pouring my heart to Him for hours. I expected I should feel the power, but it was not so. . . . At last I said "I am Thine, and Thou art mine." I got up, but I did not realise anything new excepting this, that from that hour, I knew I did not belong to myself, but to God. I went home. I think it was between one or two o'clock. I knocked at the door and went in and told my wife what I had done with God.

'I got up early in the morning—it was Sunday—and went to church. Still I did not feel anything new; but the realization that I belonged to God did not go away from my heart. I left the church and was going home, the preacher also going with me, and I was prompted to tell him what I had said to God the previous night. No sooner had I obeyed God's prompting than the power came. I felt the power and was scarcely able to stand. I went home and took the meeting as usual. I did not preach any new truth, nor did I speak eloquently. I simply told the old, old story about Jesus, but the words went home with power, and also I felt that the words came out without any effort. Above all to my great joy,

I saw souls were crying, and I also cried with joy as soon as the meeting was over.'

This tract by Tamil David, from which we have quoted, came into the hands of a remarkable man, Mr. G. L. Pilkington, a missionary of the C.M.S. in Uganda. He had been there three years. They were years of astonishing achievement, because he had completed the translation of the New Testament into Luganda, and had done many books of the Old Testament. But he felt intensely disappointed at the dearth of spiritual results in his work. A native reader had gone back, declaring that there was nothing in Christianity, which was not in his old religion. So in a mood of great despondency, Pilkington had gone for a few days to Komé, a small island in Lake Victoria.

While Pilkington was thus on the island, he learned the secret of the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit and this transformed his life. Speaking of his experience to a gathering of students in Liverpool in 1896, he said 'A book by David, the Tamil evangelist, shewed me that my life was not right, that I had not the power of the Holy Ghost. I had consecrated myself hundreds of times, but I had not accepted God's gift. I saw now that God commanded me to be filled with the Spirit. Then I read, "All things, whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them", and claiming this promise, I received the Holy Spirit.'

As one turns over the pages of David's little book, one wonders what special message it had for Pilkington, and whether it has any message for us today. In it David endeavours to answer a question which has been on the hearts of seekers after more abundant life all down the ages 'How can I receive this Baptism of the Holy Ghost?'

David's answer is 'Get on your knees and ask God

for it, claim it by faith; thank him on your knees before you rise, then go and testify to others that God has given you this baptism. You cannot feel it now, but you are baptised, because you have claimed God's promises. God does not tell you to feel but believe. . . . Go and tell it out as you did when you were saved by faith. When you tell it out, it shows you believe, and God thereby is glorified. If you are afraid to testify about it, it means you do not believe and you have not got it. If a teacher says to his pupils "I give you six weeks holiday from today", what would the children do? Do you think they would hold their peace? Certainly not; in half an hour's time the whole town would know the news.'

'When you tell it out, it shows you believe, and God thereby is glorified.' This is exactly what Pilkington did when he got back from Komé to Mengo on December 7th, 1893. Everybody noticed the change in him. His very face spoke of its reality. On December 8th, 9th, and 10th a wonderful series of revival meetings began. Christians of old standing found new power and holiness; chiefs came forward and confessed that hitherto they had been only nominal Christians; and a large number of heathen were converted. The apostate 'reader' came back. That happy time left its mark upon all the subsequent history of the mission.

Writing about these events many years after, Dr. Eugene Stock (*East and West,* July 1921) says,

'In December 1893 an event occurred of which little was said at the time, but which had great results. The missionaries were not happy about the converts; nor indeed the converts about themselves, for they had consciences, and some acknowledged that they were little better men as Christians than they had been as pagans. The missionaries sought by earnest prayer for more spiritual power in their own lives and

teachings, and the issue was what was afterwards felt to have been a revival of true religion.

'It is easy to overstate the results of such movements. Perhaps it is still easier to understate them. For it was from that time that the great extension of the work began. The missionaries had not gone far from the capital; and there were few evangelistic tours by converts. But now scores and presently hundreds of voluntary evangelists went in all directions proclaiming the Divine Message; within two years two hundred Synagogues (as Mr. Fisher called them) had been opened all over the country; and all was the work of the infant Church without a penny of English money.'

The success of this system was tremendous. It was energized by the great spiritual forces which were working through Pilkington and the Baganda people. In 1894 there were 68 native agents and 1,375 Christian adherents, and during the year there were 544 baptisms. In 1897, the year of Pilkington's death, there were 659 agents, and 4,442 baptisms, and 12,086 Christian adherents. By 1902 this figure had risen to 38,844 and today a quarter of the population of Uganda are Christian. Pilkington was killed during the mutiny of the Soudanese troops on December 11th, 1897. The capture of Mwanga and Kabarega, however, restored peace to the land, and we have seen how both these kings were won for Christ before they died on the Seychelles Islands.

# APPENDIX

*'A Study of Emigration in Relation to the Life of the Tinnevelly Church.'*

This study was undertaken under the auspices of the Central Board of Christian Higher Education in India, by Mr. M. V. Subrahmanyam, M.A., L.T., of St. John's College, Palamcottah, and was published in December, 1938, for the meeting of the International Missionary Council at Tambaram.

The term of reference was to consider the emigration of the Anglican Christians of the Tinnevelly District and its relation to the life of the Church, not only with the help of Government publications alone, but by issuing a questionnaire to the clergy of the District.

1. *The extent of emigration.* There are 227,604 Christians in the Tinnevelly District out of a total population of 2,046,907, which represents 11·1%. Of the Christian population 45% are Anglicans, who number 102,489. Of this number, 9,206 are emigrants, which represents about 8%.

Of these 5,287 are reported to be in Ceylon, 266 in Burma, 1,536 in the Federated Malay States, 1,091 in the plantations of South India, and 367 are reported to be in other places such as Poona, South Africa, and other places.

Roughly this number represents 3,393 traders, 2,468 labourers in plantations, 1,448 domestic servants, 961 public servants and clerks, and 173 mechanics.

2. *The reasons for emigration.* Three reasons are given. (*i*) Economic pressure, (*ii*) The 'emigration habit', (*iii*) The enterprising spirit of the Christians (esp. the Nadar Christians).

(*i*) Owing to the geographical position of S. and S.-E. Tinnevelly, the agriculturists are at the mercy of the elements. The failure of rain brings ruin to them, and many are forced to borrow. Unable to repay the loan the poor agriculturist seeks fresh fields and pastures new.

Also the Christians in such areas as Megnanapuram and Nalumavady were dependent on the palmyra for their livelihood. The acceptance of Christianity made many of the Nadars look down upon tapping of toddy, and they gave it up fifteen years ago. They prefer to go to Ceylon to increase their income. Areas where there is the benefit of both monsoons have sent out few emigrants, and few have gone from places near the industrial and trading centres such as Tuticorin.

(*ii*) During the great famine of 1876-8, the first batch of emigrants so much benefited their economic condition by going elsewhere, that others followed their example, although in later years there was no famine, and failure of rains. When fathers went to Ceylon, they took their sons with them, and thus the habit of going to Ceylon became strong.

(*iii*) The Nadar Community form the majority of the Tinnevelly Church. Their enterprise is known throughout S. India. This enterprise has been quickened by Christianity. It has shaken off the shackles of tradition and custom, and given them freedom. It has also raised the standard of life and increased the wants of its followers. In addition the break up of the family system has deprived the weak members of the support of the strong, and therefore they have to go abroad to make their livelihood.

The report sums this up in the following words: 'The case for the emigration of the labourer class is doubtless simply general poverty and indebtedness; that of the smaller tradesmen and public servants and clerks is general enterprise. . . . Thus while the latter emigrate because they *wish* to, the labourers do so because they *must*.'

3. *The effects of emigration.* (*i*) Moral and Social, (*ii*) Church Relationships, (*iii*) Economic.

(*i*) Of the 9,000 odd emigrants, only 1,665 live abroad with their wives. Of the tradesmen, those who go to Ceylon, do not take their families with them, the reason being that it costs less to keep them in their native villages than it does abroad. Public servants tend to visit their villages during their holidays. The labourers do so every two or three years, when they have completed their contract with their employers. And so emigration has resulted

in no real settlement abroad. Circle Chairmen and pastors tell us that it has not resulted in any moral deterioration in the family left at home. Abroad, the Tamil has been compared to the Scotsman of the east, tending to form a clan where two or three are in one place. Should any member go astray, he is kept in the narrow way, or else packed off home by the next boat. It is admitted that they tend to acquire habits of drinking liquor while they are away from home, but they do not become drunkards.

(*ii*) *Church Relationships.* In Ceylon, and Burma the Indians take a great interest in their places of worship. They support their own pastors. But they tend to be more liberal in the money which they send back to their own pastorates in India. In the Tinnevelly diocese, the sum of Rs. 13,079-8-0 was received by the home pastorates from those living abroad in 1935. When money is needed for any special purpose, collectors go out and collect subscriptions from the Tinnevelly Christians living abroad. In this way a large sum of money was collected for the Dornakal Cathedral (see p. 26). This liberality on the part of tradesmen and well placed officials is a pleasing sign of their gratitude to the Tinnevelly Church. Less pleasing is their reluctance to give to the Churches and pastors who care for them in the places whither they have gone.

(*iii*) *Economic.* The Study closes by saying 'Emigration takes the man rather than the woman, the young rather than the old, the bright and ambitious rather than the dull and lethargic. It may therefore be argued that the injury done by its selective tendencies to the average quality of the population is likely to be serious, especially when in the Tinnevelly District the percentage of emigrants to the total Anglican population is eight. But as against this view we may say that emigration has been of immense advantage not only to the emigrants themselves, but to those who remain behind. It has been a useful weapon in the hands of the worker to improve his status, and thus it has been an indispensable means of raising the standard of life. We therefore see no reason why emigration should be discouraged.' The Madras Census Officer noted in 1931 that one of the social effects of emigration had been a growing independence and self respect on the part of

depressed class people who went abroad. He noticed that labourers from well run estates generally brought to their villages some of the ideas of cleanliness, food, and comfort acquired abroad. Evidences of this are seen in many South Indian villages. 'I have myself on several occasions had pointed out to one a house different markedly from its neighbours as being that of some one who had been to Malaya or Ceylon.'[1]

4. *Changes of emigration.* Contemporary politics seems to suggest that the stream of traders and labourers to Ceylon and other places will slacken. The policy of 'Ceylon for the Ceylonese' has spread from the Government services to mercantile firms. Indian labour suffers from disabilities of franchise. Traders are still able to make their way. But in Burma since her separation from India, and in Malaya the position is far from comfortable for Indian emigrants.

[1] *Census of India* 1931, Vol. xiv, Part I, p. 93.

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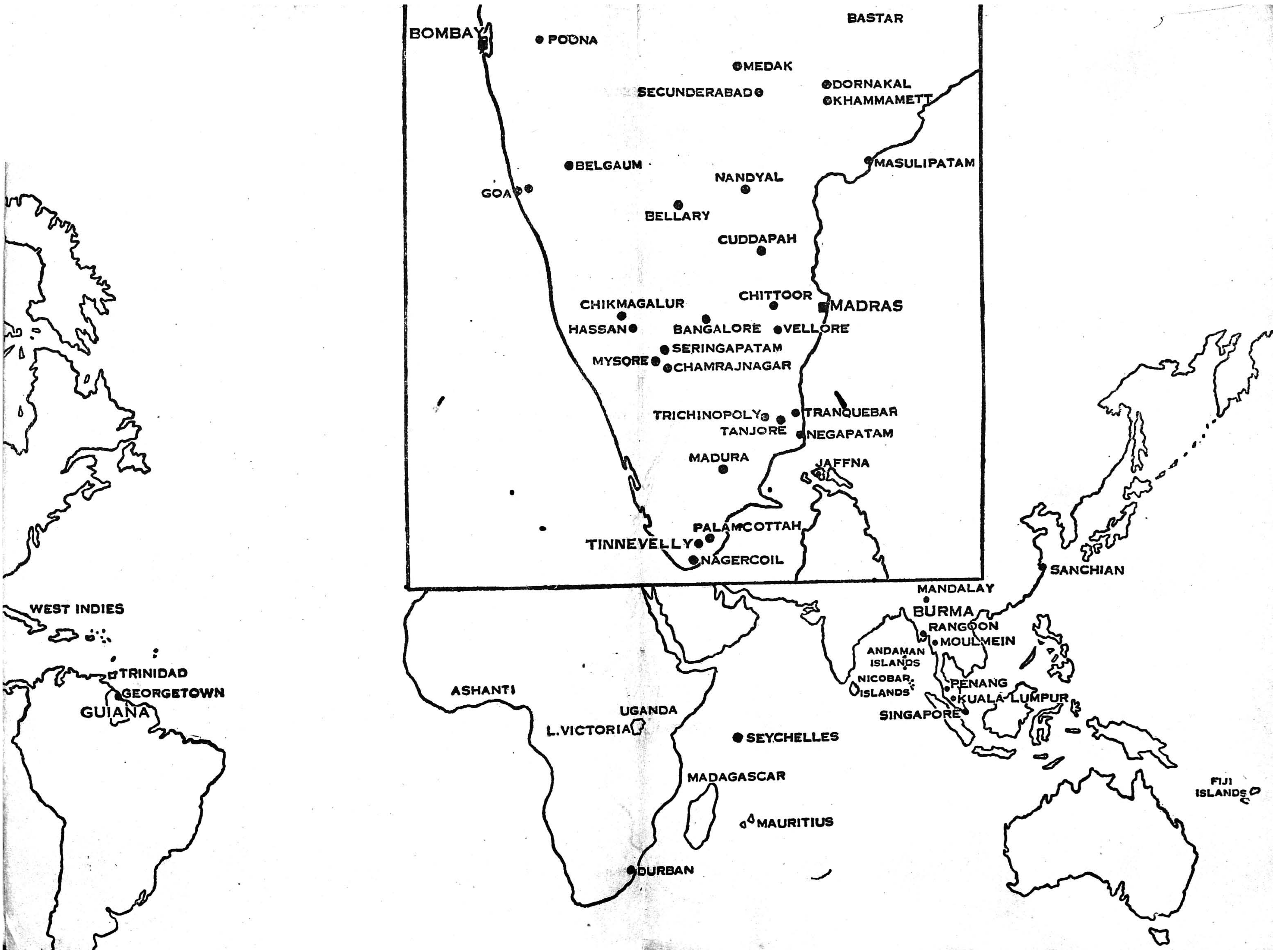
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